Letters and Recollections of World War I

ROBERTS

LETTERS AND RECOLLECTIONS

of
WORLD WAR I

and
BIOGRAPHY OF COMPANY N

by
GILBERT ROBERTS
21st Engineers
Light Railway - A.E.F.

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE
Dedicated to
THE MOTHER WHO SAVED THE LETTERS
and
THE GRANDMOTHER WHO WAITED

". . . remembering the best and forgetting the worst"

Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio
May 30, 1918
Thornburg, Roberts, Welker

Brookwood, England
Memorial Day, May 30, 1919
American Civil War Vets

Touring in Scotland
April 1919

Shakespeare Country
Stratford-on-Avon, England
April 1919

Along the Thames River
London, England
June 1919

The long hill to
Camp Pontanezan
Brest, France
July 1919
Akright, Roberts

The last inspection
July 25, 1919
Camp Mills, Long Island

In line for discharge
July 26, 1919
Camp Mills, Long Island

In civvies again
August 1, 1919

INTRODUCTION

I entered military service at Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, May 27, 1918, and was discharged at Camp Mills, Long Island, July 26, 1919. As an enlisted man in the Engineer Corps I saw service in the United States, France, and England. I was a prolific letter writer and kept the home folk and my friends as well informed as time and censorship permitted concerning my activities and travels. Mother kept my letters carefully filed in a packing box and a few years later gave them to Helen, suggesting that use might be made of them in the future. For several years I have been planning a narrative based on the letters and now I am ready to begin.

In no sense will this be a history of the war. I am using the letters to refresh my memory of the small part I played in the momentous events of the war period, hoping that those who come after me may find the highlights interesting. I now regret that I did not keep a day-to-day journal; one's memory dims a bit with the passing of years. My wartime experiences were not spectacular but were interesting and educational. In England I visited many historic places and met many important persons only because I was in uniform and on special duty. I was in the midst of history in the making.

Most of the letters are quoted in full; others, in part to avoid useless repetition and personal references. Occasional errors made in good faith are corrected and youthful opinions freely expressed are fully noted. Reference to "slackers" is confined to initials and wartime asperities toned down. I do hope my readers discern as they read that I added maturity in thought and judgment as weeks grew into months and years.

During the past four years I have attended reunions of my old company and regiment and am in touch through correspondence with many former comrades. Company N of the 21st Engineers lives on in my book as does the Student Detachment in the London School of Economics.

February 1, 1967 Gilbert Roberts Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

Shortly after the declaration of war against Germany I went to Cleveland and tried to enlist in the Marine Corps. Congenital flat feet caused the examiners to reject me and later the Naval Reserve did likewise. I was advised to return to school and await Uncle Sam's pleasure in the matter of Selective Service commonly known as the "Draft." Late in the spring of 1918 my number came up, and I was duly examined and certified. I was nearing graduation from Kent State Normal College, and the Governor of Ohio ordered all male students in state schools graduated who were called and close to graduation. Diplomas and degrees were awarded when Commencement came. I was registered for the draft in my home county, Knox, and on May 27 I reported at headquarters for transportation.

May 27 was a red-letter day in Mount Vernon, the county seat. Two hundred draftees reported for transfer to Camp Sherman, the largest number to that date to be called. Families and friends, and of course the curious, were there. A band appeared to furnish stirring music for the occasion, and there were a few speeches. Civil and Spanish War veterans were present, among them my own Grandfather Foote who had marched to the sea with Sherman and had served four years in the Union Army. The family accompanied me to the Baltimore and Ohio station, and in all there must have been thousands present. A special train was provided; and when it arrived, we found that it also carried a large contingent from Mansfield, Ohio. I was well acquainted with a number of my fellow draftees, especially so with Earl Welker and Frank Thornburg; and reference is made to them later as well as to other Knox County boys.

Box lunches were put on the train in Newark, Ohio, and we arrived in Chillicothe late in the afternoon. A light drizzle of rain was falling as we climbed off the train, and we then and there received our first issue of army equipment: poncho raincoats, leftovers from the Philippine campaigns. A poncho

is a large square of oilcloth with a hole in the center for the head, a very efficient device but decidedly outlandish and outmoded. After a short march we were placed in barracks with the 158th Depot Brigade, the receiving place for new arrivals. Along the way we were greeted with calls from bystanders, who offered much advice and good-natured ribbing. Within a few days we were doing likewise when new contingents of draftees passed us. It was all in the game and not in any sense personal criticism.

In the barracks we were given an introductory lecture by a Sergeant Smith, an old timer and veteran army man, who told us what we could do and not do, beginning right then. Earl and I had had a bit of military drill in college and had at least learned to keep still and do as we were told. Poor Frank, he had a rude awakening when beds were assigned. Everything was in short supply including beds. Earl and I drew beds fully equipped, but Frank was given a mattress on the floor. "Must I sleep on the floor?" objected the rather fastidious Frank as he surveyed the situation. Said the sergeant, "You'll sleep where you are told to sleep and be damned lucky you have a mattress; and no more lip from you; just remember that you are in the army now." That settled Thornburg once and for all. We were issued mess equipment and told how to use it. We lined up for supper and found a guard waiting at the garbage can who warned us to take only what we needed and not throw away anything. Violations brought a couple of hours extra duty on the woodpile. Our first night brought the sergeant's wrath upon us when several men continued talking after lights were out. From that time on we continued to learn that we were in the army. Next day physical examinations were made and I passed in spite of the flat feet. We were duly given the oath of allegiance and signed the muster roll. We were in the army. My first letter follows.

Camp Sherman, May 28, 1918

Dear Folks: - Here we are at last. I do not have much time to write now but enough to let you know we arrived safely. Got in at six o'clock last night. We received part of our outfits, mess kits and blankets, etc. We are due for examinations in fifteen minutes. We arrived in the rain, but the weather is fine this morning. I will write later and give more details concerning the camp. We saw Harry Gardner last night, and he is leaving for New York today. All Knox County boys are in the same barracks. My address: 9th Company, 3rd Training Battalion, 158 Depot Brigade, Camp Sherman, Ohio. Write soon.

Gilbert

School of the soldier, squad and platoon drill started following examinations, and several of our number suffered more or less from effects of the "shots" we received for immunization. Food was good and plentiful, but we had grumblers who seemed to expect an Astor House menu. I soon learned that soldiers were expected to grumble; it helped relieve the feelings of homesickness.

We were in quarantine for two weeks and could not leave the Depot area. A Y.M.C.A. hut nearby supplied writing paper and envelopes as well as tables and desks for writing. We had to depend on the sergeants and corporals for mailing our letters and they were not always prompt, being very busy with their own assignments.

Camp Sherman, Ohio. June 1, 1918

Dear Folks: - Another day is over and we are awaiting evening mess call. We have drilled all day with several intervals for rest. An awkward squad has been formed for the worst of the rookies. My drill last summer at Kent helps me very much, and I escaped being assigned to this squad. It is very hot here now. Shade trees were forgotten when the camp was built.

Earl had a letter from home today saying you were expecting a letter from

me. I wrote letters home Monday night and Tuesday morning. We can't get out to mail our letters and have to depend on the sergeants to do this for us.

You probably have the corn planted by this time with part of it coming up. When we get out of quarantine, I will start mailing post cards. I have a few cards now but have no stamps. I will appreciate it very much if you enclose some stamps in your next letter, 2's and 3's. I am much in need of them. I would like a box of candy, too, if it is not asking too much. Absence of cake and pie makes one want candy. Caramels and Hershey bars are preferable to soft chocolates on account of the heat. It is about time for the whistle so will close. I will write more when I can get out and see more. Love to all,

Gilbert

Camp Sherman was hastily constructed after the declaration of war and named for the famous Ohio Civil War general. The camp was laid out by army engineers over farm land not far from Chillicothe. Barracks and drill fields, roads, water supply, and sanitary facilities, followed patterns worked out for best results. Civilian service organizations such as the Y.M.C.A., Salvation Army, and Knights of Columbus, were permitted to supply building facilities in places reserved for them. A base hospital and military headquarters were located in strategic spots as were mess halls, post office, and equipment storage. It was a most business-like place and a credit to its planners and builders.

Camp Sherman, Ohio, June 3, 1918

Dear Folks: Your letter came today, welcome to be sure. We had just finished washing our mess kits and were hanging around waiting for the command "fall in," when the sergeant announced "mail." The sergeant reads the names and we answer "here," and he throws the letters in a general direction and we dive for them. I received in all three letters, one from Aunt Libby arriving with yours. I hope mail delivery improves here as I do not like the present system.

I have ordered my Kent paper sent here, and I would like to have the one that came last week together with the Kentonian. I just paused a moment to look out at a group of Mennonites, conscientious objectors who are in barracks near us. The dirtiest work in camp is done by these people, and two of them just went by carrying away the garbage. There are about 150 conscientious objectors here now, Mennonites, Amish, Adventists, and Dunkards. They lead a dog's life with all the hooting and calling that goes on when they appear.

You may put the insurance papers with my policy and everything will be O.K. I applied for $10,000 worth of army insurance last week. Worth Cook came in to see us yesterday afternoon. He is employed in the office of the Depot Brigade and part of the time he guards the convalescent ward where cripples wait their turn in the hospital. Patients get so anxious to get out that guards are necessary.

We get our second "shots" in the back tomorrow. My vaccination did not "take" so I am due for another. In all we get three "shots" and a "scratch."

There is a large field of corn near our mess hall. The stalks are not large yet, but the field is clean and well cultivated. We drill for an hour and then rest for fifteen minutes. This afternoon we drilled for only one hour and the captain and lieutenant talked to us in a nice shady spot for a couple of hours. Water was brought, and we sang songs. I like what I am doing although I would prefer being in my chosen work. Drill so far has been easy, being a repetition of what I had last summer. They called for all those who had had drill, and 13 of us responded including Earl, Thornburg and myself. We were appointed acting corporals.

Ben Reed left for home today. He wanted to stay, but his crooked foot ruled him out. My left foot is bothering me, and the submarine-sized shoes they gave me are enough to kill a cow. The lieutenant said he would recommend

my transfer to the convalescent division if I so requested. I will stick to it a while, and perhaps all will be well when the shoes are well broken in.

The office jobs here are the hardest things in the place. The boys have to work late at night, but I suppose that will be my lot if I am transferred.

When I signed my personnel record card, I indicated that I could drive mules and take care of them. There are four mules in each team and can you imagine me driving a four-in-hand? I must close now and see what Earl is doing. Perhaps he will want to talk or find another friend or two. Love to all,

Gilbert.

My left foot continued to give me trouble off and on throughout my entire tour of duty in the army. When I was discharged fourteen months after my induction, the examining doctors could not understand how I had been accepted in the first place. After returning to civilian duties, I found a specialist who equipped me with metal supports that served me well for many years. These supports failed as I grew older and for the past ten years (1956-66) I have been compelled to forego many active pursuits, especially distance walking. Fortunately for me, my military assignments never included marching long distances carrying a full pack. I put up with the difficulty as best I could whenever it turned up, and I am glad I did so. Otherwise I would have missed out on a series of grand adventures that have meant much to me, some of which will be brought out in this narrative. At age seventy-two I have no regrets for anything that came my way during my tour of duty in the armed forces. My difficulties were minor in comparison with those suffered by many who lost life or limb. Good fortune followed me all the way and I am profoundly thankful to God and my fellow men.

Camp Sherman, Ohio, June 5, 1918

Dear Folks: Your letter and box arrived and I thank you for them. I also received a box and letter from Aunt Libby. Please tell her that they arrived O.K., and I will acknowledge her thoughtfulness later. I also had letters from Edith, Karl Keller, and a classmate named A. McClintock. The last named was drafted some time back and sent to Camp Gordon where he failed the physical examination and was sent home. Keller expects to be in the service soon.

We will be out of quarantine next Wednesday. You can come any Sunday after that day. We are permitted to see visitors only after four o'clock on week days. When you come, please bring along my copy of "The Chestnut Burr." The 84th Division is coming from Camp Taylor to finish training here, and we may find ourselves going over with it. The place is alive with rumors.

We had our second "shots" yesterday, and I received another vaccination. The whole procedure is practically painless, and it is surprising how many men keel over at the sight of a bit of blood. Today we are somewhat stiff and sore. I ran a high fever last night for a while as did many others. The inoculations and vaccinations are safeguards against disease and have proved highly successful.

We attended a picture show in the Y.M.C.A. last night and saw W. S. Hart in "The Wolves of the Rails." Our cooks came up with a good meal tonight consisting of boiled beef, beans, peas, bread, butter, sliced peaches and bananas, bread pudding and coffee. On account of the "shots" in the morning, drill in the afternoon was called off.

Tomorrow we will be drilling again. Officers are very reasonable about drill, allowing a fifteen-minute rest period after each hour of activity. Thanks for the stamps; I can make good use of them. Write soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

When our contingent arrived at Camp Sherman, the 83rd Division about 20,000 strong with General Glenn commanding was preparing to move to the Atlantic coast, preparatory to embarking for France. During my short stay in Sherman, troop movements were in progress and General Hale with the advance guard of the 84th arrived. General Hale became camp commander when General Glenn departed. Hale will appear again in this narrative as the cause of one of the hottest day's work I ever experienced.

During quarantine when we were closely confined to our barracks and nearby grounds, a Knox County boy by the name of Ahrendt often entertained us with his violin. An accomplished musician, this man had brought along his beloved instrument.

Camp Sherman, Ohio, June 7, 1918

Dear Brother Wilber: Your letter was tossed at me after retreat yesterday. Retreat is a beautiful ceremony. The company lines up in front of the barracks, the first sergeant calls "attention," and as the bugle sounds the call "To the Colors," he orders "parade rest." The position for parade rest is assumed by placing the right foot eight inches to the rear with the left knee slightly bent, and the left thumb clasped by the right hand in front of the hips. Everyone comes to "attention" as the band plays "The Star-Spangled Banner." The sergeant then dismisses us and we scramble for the mail.

Who started that report about my being a lieutenant? They don't make lieutenant in a week. I am in a detail taking special training for the rank of non-commissioned officer, sergeant or corporal. There were thirty men in the detail when we started out, but half of them have been dropped. We are kept on the jump, have to get drill books, learn the wig wag and semaphore signal codes. It means work and more work, but I am in it for all there is and am going after it. My drill last summer at Kent is of much assistance to me now.

We changed barracks yesterday, but our addresses are the same as you now have. At mess we received orders to pack and within five minutes after "fall out" I was ready. Two minutes after arriving at my new cot, I was sitting on it and at home to my friends. Moving in the army is simple and easy. The less stuff you have the easier it is to move. I was on kitchen-police duty last Monday along with Frank Thornburg. Today we policed our quarters, picking up snipes, sticks and stones, sweeping up dirt and cleaning the latrine. A few of the boys had to dig a ditch.

Earl, Thornburg, and I sleep one, two, three now. We will be comfortable for a while at least. We are feeling good now after the "shots." Some of these fellows will never learn anything. One named Giasianti is unable to tell his right foot from the left. The non-com gave him a straw and told him: "Now, you with the spaghetti face, that straw is over your left foot, dumb ox you, march." He stepped off with his right foot and the sergeant nearly had a fit. At last an awkward squad was formed and given to the captain for drill. I expected Dick Snyder would have trouble, but to my surprise he does very well and likes drill and the army.

For our supper tonight we had plenty of beans, potatoes, bread and jam. But, believe me, it is a long way from supper at home. A mess kit on a board is much different from our table at home or the lunch counter in Kent. Food is good and plentiful, but something is lacking; and that something is home. Do not leave it until you have to. Army life seems romantic to the outsider, but on the inside it can get pretty rough. It is a case of "root, hog, or die" and so we root. I am glad you are planning to come down to see us.

You should see me washing my stuff. Cold water and an old scrub brush does the job. No ironing is necessary. I do not like the job; and as soon as I get

out of quarantine, the laundry will get some more business.

I hope you are able to get the automobile repaired soon. I must close now and go outside with a few of the men to practice signalling which will take most of my spare time for a while. I am trying to do the job right. Love to all,

Gilbert.

There always has been and always will be resentment toward authority and soldiers have much to learn, especially in the first few weeks in the army. With few exceptions the professionally trained officer and non-com earn and merit respect. The average American is an individualist and only learns team work and bows to discipline with difficulty. When war was declared the United States Army was almost totally unprepared. The regular army was small; and rapid expansion, necessary as it was, found every facet in short supply including trained officers. Training schools were established and volunteer candidates given "cram" courses consisting of three months' intensive instruction. Successful candidates were commissioned as captains, lieutenants, or majors, and then assigned where needed.

Many of the commissions went to men who had had previous training in the army, national guard, or in college. Others with experience in business or professional leadership were given officer ratings and politics was not altogether absent. Such names as "ninety-day wonders," "shavetails," and others less respectable were forthcoming from the ranks when the self-conscious and newly appointed officers appeared. Some, of course, won respect and became efficient in discharge of their duties, while others fell by the wayside. The non-commissioned personnel, hastily chosen from the ranks, suffered a high mortality. In both groups there were heroes and heels, and how quickly we recognized their real characters! After nearly fifty years I find most of my own original judgments stand unimpaired. We took officers as they came.

Camp Sherman, Ohio, June 11, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your letter and papers came today and were very welcome indeed. We received our third "shots" this morning and were allowed to rest the remainder of the day. Just now I have a bit of fever and am stiff in every joint. By morning it will all be over but unpleasant while it lasts.

We are happy to know that you are coming down. Wilbur Strong and Jessie Belle were here a few days ago, and it was good to see folk from the home community. We are expecting to be transferred any day; and if there is time, I will notify you. If we are not in our present barracks, the sergeant in charge can tell you where we are. Our barracks number, L-33, is in the Depot Brigade. We are not far from the Base Hospital. We can get out to eat with you. Bring along anything you can prepare easily. I could relish some potato salad and raisin pie.

We had orders today to get rid of our cameras so I will give you mine Sunday. I have taken several pictures and you can get them developed at Fink's.

I do not feel up to writing more. This "shot" produces all the symptoms of typhoid fever for twenty-four hours so I will go to bed and sleep it off. Love to all and hope to see you soon,

Gilbert.

Camp Sherman, Ohio, June 12, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing tonight under unusual circumstances. I was transferred today to the Detention Camp which means going overseas very shortly. They tell us nothing. The whole thing came as a surprise. Earl and Thornburg were not transferred. Be sure to come Sunday, and you can see me. Hunt up Earl first and he will conduct you. We can eat together. I hope Wilber gets down here before I leave. Pay is not always on time here, and I would like fifty dollars. That amount will be sufficient to carry me over in case I miss pay day. Must close

now and mail this letter. Love to all,

Gilbert.

There is a most interesting interlude between letters which I will describe from memory. The next letter is from Camp A. A. Humphreys, Virginia, and is dated June 19. During the interlude writing was out of question, but I did make a telephone call home, and MET General Hale, nor will I forget him as long as I live. No, it was not a personal meeting; nor was it casual. Official, very much so.

THE INTERLUDE

The detention camp housed men temporarily while they were being processed for transfer to other camps and branches of military service, Personal interviews were necessary and we were under strict orders to stay within camp confines and voice range of the orderly room. Lack of trained personnel was very evident, and greenhorn clerks and non-coms were doing their best to bring order out of chaos. I managed to get permission to make a phone call home and told the folk of my impending departure from Sherman. Arrangements were immediately made at home for a visit earlier than had been planned. Father and Mother, Paul and Edith, came in Paul's car two days later, and we had a fine visit. On the Sunday following, Earl Welker's parents came as originally scheduled, bringing Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson Swank with them; and as I was still in Sherman, I ate picnic dinner with them.

As I have previously stated, General Hale had assumed command of Camp Sherman and, as is customary with generals, set out on an inspection tour of military facilities. Obeying our orders to stay close at hand, about fifty of us in the detention camp were gathered under a convenient shade tree near the orderly room. A car was observed approaching rapidly, flying the two-star pennant of a major general. The car halted near us in a cloud of dust and the general with two

aides dismounted and started toward us. Some one shouted "attention," and we came up in a hurry. Picking out a luckless private, the general inquired as to what we were doing. Replied the luckless private: "Nothing, sir, we are waiting for interviews and orders." "At ease," barked the general, and he strode to the orderly room and the shack literally shook while he was inside. Looking neither to the right nor the left, the general returned to his car; one of the aides yelled "at ease" when we again came to "attention." Ten minutes later a redfaced sergeant lined us up, led the way to a tool house, supplied us with hoes, rakes, and shovels, led us to a nearby vacant drill field teeming with weeds, and ordered us to get busy cleaning up. It was a hot day and we continued until late in the afternoon. Next morning (Sunday) we again tackled the weeds until almost noon. Passes were given out, and I had dinner with the Welkers and the Swanks.

The detention camp was located on the edge of Sherman and adjoined a highway. We spread out the picnic dinner under a clump of trees and in spite of the extreme heat were very comfortable. Years later, Earl and I visited Camp Sherman, no longer a military post but housing a federal reformatory in part. The barracks were gone, and drill fields returned to cultivation; but we did find the clump of trees beside the highway where we ate our picnic dinner.

In filling out my personnel card, I indicated that I knew something about photography. My interview in the detention camp disclosed that I was being transferred as a photographer to Camp A. A. Humphreys, Virginia, which was a training spot for the Engineer Corps. A fellow Knox County soldier, Troy Harris of Mount Vernon, had marked his card in like manner and was also being transferred as a photographer. Troy was a bit disturbed since, as he said, his knowledge of photography was limited to selling enlarged pictures. He had visions of going to the guard house or doing extra duty for lying. As I knew enough about the business to operate a camera and process film and plates, I was not worried.

Troy's worries were groundless. Neither of us ever put our hands on a camera in Camp Humphreys or in France. I purchased a camera in England for my own use.

Four Knox County men, Troy Harris, Lantie Householder, Charles Cervenka, and myself, were transferred to the Engineers. On June 18 we said good-bye to Sherman, boarded a B & O special train, and made another approach to overseas duty. The journey was slowly accomplished, and the weather hot. Box lunches, put on the train at mealtimes, at least assuaged the pangs of hunger. We were crowded as soldiers usually are. Two seats facing each other served the needs of three men and their packs. Our coach was probably the one used to transport Roosevelt's Rough Riders to Tampa during the Spanish American War. We left Sherman about four o'clock and traveled all night. We had much fun along the way, singing, shouting, and kidding our friendly brakeman. The conductor proved to be an old army man and well knew how to handle soldiers and get along with them. (My letters will carry on from here.)

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., June 19, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am in Camp A. A. Humphreys, Virginia, about 17 miles from Washington, D.C. We left Sherman about four o'clock yesterday and arrived here at noon today. We came by way of Athens, Ohio, Parkersburg and Martinsburg, W. Va., Cumberland and Harpers Ferry, and through Washington and Alexandria, to a place in the open country five miles from Camp Humphreys. We had a good view of the Capitol and several government buildings as we passed through Washington. The trip was tiresome, and we were crowded. The "eats" were not heavy. We marched five miles to Camp Humphreys, which is only partially completed and in wooded territory. I think my assignment as a photographer is a blind one, or rather a joke. The men here say that everyone drills and dig ditches all the time. I do not like the looks of this camp and would prefer being back with the boys in Sherman.

We had a nice time last Sunday at Sherman with Welkers and Swanks. The dinner and the cake and pie were fine. Time is running out so I must close. Love to all,

Gilbert

Several years after W.W. I, Camp Humphreys was renamed Fort Belvoir and now, much enlarged, is the permanent grounds for the Engineer Corps. The temporary wooden buildings have given way to splendid brick structures, and the whole place is a credit to the defense department. The Fairfax family in Colonial days owned much of the land on which the camp is located, and the old Fairfax mansion, Belvoir, stood on the banks of the Potomac River. The mansion was destroyed by fire years ago, but foundation stones are still to be seen. The Virginia National Guard maintained a training camp near the ruins of the mansion, and it was known as Camp Belvoir. When I arrived in Humphreys, Belvoir was being used as a staging place for troops preparing for overseas duty. Belvoir was about two miles from Humphreys proper and reached by a road through the woods. The steamboat landing and base hospital were at Belvoir. I spent time in both sections of the camp - Humphreys and Belvoir.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., June 20, 1918

Dear Folks: - You will find my new address at the end of this letter. This morning we drilled for a couple of hours over a sand hill. This afternoon we dug stumps in the woods. Photography??? I think this is just plain engineer duty, which is much better than either the artillery or infantry. Perhaps all this is only preparatory to doing photographic work. You would hardly think they would send you here for one thing and then give you another. But - this is the army.

We did not have to work very hard with the stumps. A water boy kept us supplied and we kept the shovel handles busy as props. The camp is located in

the heart of a large forest. The stumps are pulled out by a big caterpillar tractor, and we dig out the roots and fill the holes. Our baggage did not arrive until tonight, and it is difficult to get anywhere from here. A round trip by jitney to Washington costs two dollars. I am going to Washington as soon as I can get permission.

Our food is good, but the water is soft and warm. We have a water bag in our barracks with ice in it so we can have cold water when off duty. If my Kent Tribune is still coming home, please send it to me here until I can get it transferred. Must close and go over to the canteen for an ice-cream cone. Tell all hands to write and I will respond as time permits. Love to all,

Gilbert

% Y.M.C.A. Bldg. No. 20, Camp A. A. Humphreys, Virginia.

While in Camp Humphreys I served in two training battalions before being assigned permanently to Company N of the 21st Engineers. As passes out of camp were severely limited, I never succeeded in getting one. Sneaking out was a common occurrence, and the guard house always had full complements of prisoners who either overstayed leaves or went without them. I worked for a short time in an office, helping make out payrolls, and was amazed at the number of men with court-martial records. A man in one of our companies committed suicide when refused permission to go home. Every company seemed to have its quota of minor offenders doing extra duty. We had one man accused of murder waiting trial in a guard house where I served a round of guard duty. Stealing was too common; we were advised to take good care of our personal effects. I did not see much done to encourage men to attend religious services on Sundays. To me, moral standards seemed low and no one seemed to care.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., June 23, 1918

Dear Folks: - Sunday morning and cold as the devil. Virginia has a peculiar climate, hot during the day and cold at night. I could use one of those knit sweaters here; I do get rather cold in the morning. To date, I have had no coat that I can wear. A blockhead supply sergeant at Sherman gave me two coats, both too small. When I am assigned regularly here, I will be able to make an exchange for one that will fit.

We did not pull stumps yesterday. In the morning we had inspection and drill and were excused at noon for the day. Several of the boys received passes to go to Washington, but I could not qualify. To get a pass one must know the twelve general orders and pass a stiff clothes examination. No coat - no pass. Uniform and shoes must be in first-class condition. Regulation uniforms look so bad after washing that they never pass. I suppose I will have to purchase one of my own if I leave camp.

We had a downpour of rain night before last that transformed the place into a sea of mud; but it is now as dry as ever with the wind still blowing. Authorities here have an unpleasant habit of getting us up in the middle of the night for fire drill. Two nights ago we were routed out twice, and a good night's sleep was ruined. Foolishness, I call it.

Men are coming in and going out daily. There are men here from every state in the Union; most of them are enlisted soldiers ranging in age from eighteen to forty-five. We have a couple regiments of Negro soldiers in training and large numbers of civilian Negroes doing contract labor. On the way into Camp Humphreys we passed through several Negro settlements and the yards were full of grinning youngsters. I am out of news for the time being so will close. Write soon.

Love to all,

Gilbert.

In a camp built up with wooden construction, fire was an ever-present danger. Authorities did not always use good judgment in calling fire drills, and in some instances a night drill was inflicted as punishment for something that happened during the day. There were a few downright sadists in the officer corps who took delight in making men uncomfortable. As I see it now almost fifty years later, most acts of judgment were made in good faith and with the best of intentions. Thousands of hastily trained officers and non-coms worked industriously and diligently in whipping a citizen army into shape and, in spite of errors, succeeded. Griping has been the soldier's lot since Hannibal crossed the Alps, and it will ever be his privilege regardless of reason.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., June 28, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your letter came yesterday afternoon along with letters from Edith, Aunt Libby, and Sam Popham. This was the first mail I have had since coming here, and you may be sure I was happy to get it.

I am writing this in the barracks using my knee as a desk. The "Y" closes at nine o'clock, and I came from work after that time. I am working in the office temporarily while taking treatment for my feet and have been excused from drill. The office was overworked so they took me on to help. We are preparing the muster roll now, and it is a real job. We work from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with time off for dinner and supper. There are no snap jobs in the army. I have been admitted to the school for non-commissioned officers and begin work next Monday. I like this place much better now than at first.

I would like to have the pictures very much. I had some of the things Addie and Mrs. Dishong sent but thought they were sent to Earl and that he gave me some just to be sociable, and so I did not write to them.

Ex-Ambassador Gerard is to speak here Sunday evening. President Wilson speaks at Mount Vernon, five miles from here, on July 4, and I am applying for a

pass to go and hear him. I am hoping to get to Washington if I can manage a pass.

Edith tells me that a meeting is planned this summer for Palmyra Church. I hope this one turns out better than Mr. Bennet's affair. Rev. Fife is a very good man for revivals.

Must close now and get to bed and the bugle soon will sound. Love to all,

Gilbert.

P.S. I am still doing the washerwoman stunt. There is no laundry here.

Mr. Gerard was American ambassador to Germany until the outbreak of war. He was well received and made an excellent speech. I was bitterly disappointed when I was turned down for a pass to Mount Vernon. Passes were issued in quotas and our company was entitled to eight. Three of the men who received passes used them to sneak off to Washington instead, a scurvy trick to be sure. The officers either did not learn of the trickery or chose to ignore it. The men who did go to Mount Vernon reported being in a large crowd and hearing a fine address by the President. My flat feet finally ruled me out of non-com school.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 2, 1918

Dear Folks: - My new address - Company K, 4th Training Regiment. I have been transferred and am now about a mile from the "Y." Send my mail to the new address; mail will be forwarded from the "Y" if it gets there. I did not like this transfer since I had come to like the other place quite well where the officers were very fine to us. This company has a bunch of crabby officers and the non-coms are no better.

I reported here last evening and today was detailed to the pontoon-bridge construction gang. We built the bridge on the Potomac River extending it out for two hundred yards and afterwards tore it down. The practice will be repeated tomorrow. Not having worked for two weeks, my feet felt the strain. I am

still taking treatment at the hospital. I worked on the large timbers that are 4" by 4" and 31 feet long. We carry them on the run. After building the bridge, we had drill in handling the pontoon boats. I am beginning to think they lied to me about photography. I am not complaining. The office work was hard, too, with long hours. We worked all Saturday night on the muster roll and had pie and lemonade at midnight; we really had a good time out of it. Bridge building is hard but interesting.

I now have the coat problem solved. The supply sergeant here said he would exchange coats with me when he received a new supply of clothing and would take the extra one back. The supply man at Sherman got mixed up and gave me a new coat and would not take back the one I had. Neither coat fit me at all. I have not drawn any pay yet but still have forty dollars. There is little here to spend money on and I do not gamble.

I suppose the hay is all in the barn now and threshing time soon at hand. I just borrowed a pen to finish this letter, mine having gone dry. I had a card from Earl saying he expects to be transferred soon to another part of Camp Sherman. There is no chance of my getting home unless I land a furlough. At least two months of service are required for furloughs and very few are granted with that. Write when you can. Love to all,

Gilbert.

P.S. I just received a nice long letter from Uncle Henry and Bernice.

The acme in army stupidity was reached in the coat deal referred to above. I was issued a coat, much too small at Sherman. The supply man gave me another, also too small and would not take back the first one. I carried both coats to Humphreys and could not wear either. Fortunately warm weather prevailed. The Sherman man was a mouthy guy, and I almost came to blows with him. You simply cannot argue with a sergeant and win.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 4, 1918

Dear Folks: - We have today off and have plenty of time for ourselves. I did not receive a pass to go to Mount Vernon for the President's speech. Only eight passes were issued in our company and these went to men older in service than I am. However we are to have a big dinner with a program this afternoon; so the day will be well spent here. I am enclosing some films that Harry Kane sent me.

I would like four or five pairs of my black socks. My army socks are wearing out and need repairs. The big shoes we wear are hard on socks. We had yesterday afternoon off and a fine program of games replaced drill.

I am still going to the hospital and have been relieved of work and drill by orders of the orthopedic physician. I do not know what the outcome will be if they fail in getting me fixed up, probably desk work which I would rather not have. I lost out on the non-com school when I transferred, but another one begins August 1. I will be writing again very soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 8, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your letter came yesterday and the box today. The sweater and socks are just what I need. My thanks go to the knitter. Not everyone here is able to have things sent from home and must depend on the Red Cross.

Rumor has us going across soon; of course, this is guesswork - we really do not know. If you get a letter with three crosses under my signature, it means that I am sure we are going at once. We are not permitted to give information about going and mail will be probably censored then.

I am helping the supply sergeant get stuff ready for distribution so have little time for writing. I was sorry to miss Mr. Wilson's speech. Some of the men who received passes went to Washington instead, a lowdown trick to say the

least. Many men would have gone to Mount Vernon had they been given the passes.

I served on guard detail Saturday night and yesterday. We walked post two hours and were off four before having another hitch, all within a twenty-four-hour period. Guard duty is not particularly pleasant, but the experience is worth while. Must close and get busy. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 13, 1918

Dear Folks: - I know you are wondering what has become of me since I have not written since July 4. I have been so confounded busy that I could not write. We received an emergency call to help the Q.M.C. unload lumber for the new rifle range and I have been detailed to the kitchen, the sergeant thinking I could not stand the work which is very hard. Men are hurt frequently and to date sixty-five out of two hundred twenty have required first aid: splinters, bumps, etc. The officers are drivers. My work in the kitchen is not hard but requires long hours, 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. It gets dark by time we finish and have no lights other than candles.

The socks came, and many thanks for them. I received a box from Aunt Libby today. Tell her that I appreciate the things very much, and I will write to her soon. The candy Grandpa Foote sent tasted fine, but I have eaten only a little of it. I have had a stomach upset since last night but managed to help with supper. The water in this joint is awful in taste and quality. We are in tents about six miles from Humphreys. I saw the doctor, and he gave me the usual army remedy, salts. Tell Paul I received his letter yesterday, and I will reply soon.

Tonight those of us who worked on the pontoons signed up cards stating our qualifications.. Two companies from our regiment are leaving for "Somewhere" tonight. We may be leaving soon, and I will prepare a letter now to send if we leave suddenly. I hope we get out of here soon. This is one hell of a place,

and no profanity is meant. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp Humphreys was a beehive of activity and all training companies were subject to emergency calls. The tent camp was a temporary affair and located at what was then the railhead for the camp. Later the railroad was extended into camp. As the rails were laid the temporary camp moved with them. Final work on the road was held up until the engineers finished constructing a military bridge over a ravine. This bridge was then considered a model of its kind; the engineers were justly proud of it. Every day I added experiences and made new friends. In spite of its vexations I was beginning to like the army and especially the Engineer Corps. A spirit existed in the Corps that is not found elsewhere and its members are proud to wear the "castle" emblem.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 18, 1918

Dear Folks: - Having a little more time now, I will improve it by catching up with my correspondence. We are now back in our barracks, "Tenting on the Old Camp Grounds," as it were. We came back Wednesday afternoon after an eight-day stay in Hell's Half Acre, which name I applied to the little spot known officially as Camp Shirley. France cannot be much worse than that place. The water supply, always short, gave out occasionally. I drank water that was 50-50 with mud. The little two-by-four canteen soon sold out their pop and bevo and we had to make the best of it.

I worked in the kitchen and served as officers' mess orderly all the time I was in the place. Tonight the commanding officer gave me the job of mess orderly with extra pay and relieved me of all other duties. I now have a good job until I am returned to regular duty. Photography seems to have vanished into thin air. I take care of the officers' mess room, wash the dishes, and serve the food. I am also to eat whatever kind of food I serve the officers.

Pretty soft?

I am glad to hear that Wilber Foote has been made a sergeant. I have lost his address and would like to have it again. I received a box of candy from Olive and Forest Kinney yesterday and find it excellent. I will write to the donors at once. I also received a box of candy from Edgewater Avenue in Cleveland with a card reading "From a friend." I recognized the writing as that of a young lady I went with for a while in Kent. The candy was very good. I was under the impression that she had forgotten me long ago.

I had a letter from Clara telling about the smashup Uncle John had. I will venture the thought that there was some cussing going about the time the spill happened. Write when you can, and I will do likewise. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The mess orderly job did not last long. Tired of making a daily journey to the foot clinic at the hospital and seeing no results, I asked to be returned to regular duty, come what may. I decided to stick with it as long as I could and leave the whole matter to the medics. My decision proved in the long run to be the right one. A new pair of shoes helped when I resumed drilling, and I was never required to do long-distance marching with a full pack. As I look back now, I know I would have missed had I remained on duty as a mess orderly. The commanding officer said I might become a mess sergeant and stay in Humphreys indefinitely. I would have missed France and England. NO.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 20, 1918

Dear Folks: - Having plenty of time today, I decided to write again. You most likely will not hear from me again very soon. Twenty-one of us were transferred this morning to the 21st Engineers for special duty of some kind. We just finished eating a fine roast-pork dinner: roast pork with dressing, gravy, peas, mashed potatoes, rice pudding, and lemonade. A nice farewell feed, was it not?

My job as officers' mess orderly ended, and I was instructed to break in a new man at breakfast this morning. We are waiting now to sign the payroll before moving to our new quarters. I think I am getting into the right place this time.

I received a letter this morning from Karl Keller telling me that he is in Camp Lee, Virginia. The old boy is engaged to a girl who was in school with us at Kent, a very fine young lady and good student.

(Interruption for moving to new quarters)

I am writing now in the "Y" near our new quarters. I was interrupted by the call "fall in, forward march." We bade Company K farewell, and our group, now fifty-one in all, marched off with full packs. The old company is all shot to pieces, and a new bunch of recruits will come in tomorrow. I am now in Company N of the 21st Engineers, a regular army outfit, and headed overseas.

We are encamped in tents on the shores of the Potomac. I am writing on a porch not over 150 feet from the water. It is evening and the river is very calm and beautiful. I can understand why George Washington loved the Potomac view at Mount Vernon. I think I shall have a swim tonight. Any mail sent to Company K will be forwarded.

They do nothing but drill here and fit men for overseas duty. We will receive new outfits of clothes, etc. We are about a mile and a half from the main camp, and this spot is called "Belvoir." Maryland is just across the river. This place is similar to the detention camp at Sherman in purpose.

Do you remember an officer asking my name at Sherman the day you were there? Well, I finally heard from him. On July 4 the colonel sent for me and read a court-martial charge that I had violated the 96th Article of War by visiting the Community House during drill hours. The 96th Article says that any offense discrediting the service shall call for punishment at the discretion of the court: usually confinement in quarters for a month. He asked for an explanation,

which I gave. He asked how I would plead if tried and I replied "not guilty." I told him how you had gotten permission from the provost, and he said he would return the charges to Sherman and recommend that they be dismissed for lack of evidence. He further said that in all probability I would never hear of them again. It was simply the act of a young officer, Captain Kinsel, who was trying to get in good, that caused it. Believe me, when I once more put on civilian clothes, I am going to find that bird and settle up with him.

When you send my watch, better have it insured and sent special delivery. I would like very much to see you but of course cannot. Several of the men who came south with me are here too, Harris, Cervenka, and Householder. I like this place and will go to a movie tonight. Mae Marsh and E. K. Lincoln are appearing in Beloved Traitor. I am enclosing a sealed envelope for keeping until I return containing instructions concerning disposal of my property if need arises. Do not write until you hear from me again as we are here only temporarily. May God be with you until we meet again. Love to all,

Gilbert.

During my time in the army I heard many threats to get even made, but never heard of any being carried out. One learns presently that forgetting is many times more important than remembering. My service record was spotless when I was discharged and I suffered no penalties whatsoever. My record helped when I applied for university assignment in England.

Our temporary stay at Belvoir lengthened into a matter of six weeks. Weather was very warm during the daytime but cool at night. Our cots were covered with mosquito netting, and mosquitoes were a nuisance and threat to health. Our tents had board floors elevated a foot above the ground. We fought rats off and on throughout our stay. They would come up from the river at night and play around under the floors. Eatables and candles had to be securely

covered to discourage them. The company was newly organized shortly before I arrived and time was required to get things moving smoothly. I spent my first night in the company on guard duty; my beat was near the ruined foundation of the old Fairfax mansion. Since we were not armed, we carried clubs instead of rifles. A full description of Belvoir appears in the Company N history written two years ago by Walter Seiler and myself.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 23, 1918

Dear Folks: - Another note to let you know we are hard at work. Today we had gas-mask drill. A gas mask is a queer sort of thing. Just imagine a rubber cap with eyeglasses in it, tight over your face. Then take a piece of rubber tube in your mouth and place a clothespin on your nose and breathe through the tube. We have to do the act of putting it on within four seconds to be exact. A second late might mean "Davy Jones's locker."

The box came in today's mail, and many thinks for its contents. They are not feeding us very well here, and the "eats" came in very handy. Food quality is good but lacking in quantity. We fill up at the canteen, a poor place to eat. The canteen carries only gimcracks of various sorts - candy, ginger snaps, pop, etc.

We are drilling eight hours a day, and the heat is terrific. I found it rather tough not having drilled for some time. I had a slight sunstroke yesterday but was back today and pulled through in good shape. My foot is not in perfect shape yet, but I am not saying anything now. No charge of "yellow" will be ever made against me, and I shall not stop until nature itself intervenes. I had to secure my release from the foot ward so I told them I was O.K. and they let me go. This evening after drill a sergeant took us to the river for a swim and that put us all in good trim. Must close for now. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp Humphreys was expanding so rapidly that trained cooks were at a premium. A school for cooks worked overtime in training men, and many half-trained amateurs and some with no training at all were manning the kitchens. Mess sergeants were in the same category and officers assigned to oversee the conduct of meal preparation and serving were often at wits' end. I heard a great deal about this army function while serving meals to officers. I was under strict orders not to repeat what I could not help hearing. As one officer put it, it was a case of the blind leading the blind. Ever after, I was in full sympathy with the commissary department. Our Company N cooks were beginners and did their best to learn. Half-cooked meat and half-raw potatoes often appeared on the table along with other strange-appearing and-tasting dishes. We lived through it, and soon things changed for the better. Some of the boys who were out of funds could not supplement their rations at the canteen. I divided my eatables from home among my tentmates as did several others.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 25, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing again tonight to keep you in touch and let you know how things are progressing here. Your letter came today, also the Kent paper, the first I have received since leaving Sherman. I met a Kent boy here today. He was transferred to Company N from Camp Meade. I also heard from Edith yesterday.

The wheat crop turned out well. Good crops are needed now as never before. With peace coming presently, we will have to feed Europe. Speaking of peace, things look more favorable now than ever, but Germany is still in the game and may last longer than many think.

I can well imagine how the table looked when the threshers filed in. Our food is not up to the standard set in the big camp. I lived well while working in the kitchen and serving as officers' mess orderly.

I am in fine shape now. My feet are much better, no doubt due to the rest I gave them. Company N is connected with the repair of narrow-gauge railway equipment. I may be slated for clerical duties, but none of us know just what we will do. Fifty of our men were selected to carry rifles, the first six squads. We line up in "company, front" by height, and I always wind up in the first squad. In fact, there are only three men taller than I. So I have a rifle. We now have our new overseas uniforms.

Our packs contain the following articles: 2 blankets, half of a shelter tent, tent pole, 5 tent pins, slicker, suit of underwear, 2 towels, soap, toothbrush, tooth paste, razor, comb, brush, condiment can, rope, pair of socks, gloves, handerchief, overalls and blouse, and mess kit. On our belts are canteen, bayonet, first-aid kit, and ammunition pockets. We also carry a small shovel and pick and sometimes four days' rations. A big load, but necessary! Ask Grandpa Foote to compare this load with the pack he carried in Sherman's army.

We have been having gas drill, and I am now qualified to enter the gas-chamber test tomorrow. There we will have the real stuff turned on and must be ready.

A fine breeze, blowing in across the Potomac, feels good after the severe heat of the day. Must close now and turn in for the night. Love to all,

Gilbert.

By the time this letter was written, I was becoming well acquainted with many of the men in Company N, who were for the most part skilled mechanics and shop workers. I found them friendly and easy to get along with. My tentmates of the first squad were very congenial. One thing we did at least have in common, none of us liked rats.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 27, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing again to let you know I am well and still on deck. Your letter came today and one too from Aunt Libby. I am always happy to get letters and will miss them very much when I have to do without them several weeks at a time. Write as often as you can and I will enjoy and appreciate them when they do catch up, perhaps several in a bunch. The "Republican News" ceased coming some time ago, and I have only received one copy of the Kent paper since coming to Humphreys.

Yesterday was Commencement at Kent State. I found it impossible to be there and receive my degree in person. I asked President McGilvrey to send my diploma to you, and you will receive it within a few days. Please have the diploma framed and keep it for me. This piece of paper means much to me and cost me a great deal in hard work to make it respected at Kent. I ranked with the best students who have received degrees even if I do say it myself.

My job as mess orderly did not last long. Army life is very uncertain. I am happy for the change, and I think one of my last letters explained my duties, setting the table, serving meals, and washing dishes for the company officers, seven in number. I received extra pay and worked only three hours each day. I have managed to improve my status each time I moved. The "Compass" did not get me the job. I was in the kitchen at the time and as I was the only man who had on a clean uniform and was not loafing on the job, I was chosen. The captain told me several times that my services were very satisfactory.

We have white bread here, and it is very good. I drink coffee whenever we have it since no water is served at the table. Our food is poorly prepared, and I patronize the canteen, thanks to the money you sent me. Many of our men are "broke": some having received no pay and some through gambling and wastage. Lending is a risky business. I staked one man to a dollar over in the 3rd

Regiment and he promptly disappeared. He said that his mother was sick and that he was going home to see her. Overstaying his leave, he is probably afraid to come back.

The majority of our men smoke and a few chew tobacco. Soldiers should not be criticized for using tobacco. It is the only pleasure many of them have. The worst thing men can encounter in the army, worse than bullet wounds in many cases, is venereal disease. Determined efforts are made to educate men to the danger of this scourge, to train them in prevention, and to get rid of it when stricken. You would be surprised at the methods in use. I am thoroughly conversant with the ravages to human kind caused by venereal diseases and know enough to stay away from sources of infection.

We had inspection this morning of rifles and equipment. This afternoon we learned how to put up a "pup" tent and this evening many of us will go to the movies at the "Y." We will be paid soon, and something seems to be in the wind for tomorrow; what, we do not know.

Our Number One Squad occupies a tent and is composed of a group of fine fellows, eight in all. Our corporal is Eugene Burke of Pittsburgh. In the squad are three Ohio boys including myself, a New Yorker, a Marylander, and one each from Pennsylvania and Minnesota. We are all six-footers and lead the Company on the march. I had guard duty again last night and walked post 6-8 and 12-2. Guard duty is better than kitchen police, but I do not care much for either.

I think I am ready and fit for whatever comes along now. Yesterday I passed the gas test. We were in a room filled with chlorine, a very poisonous gas, about 20 minutes. My mask gave me complete protection, and I suffered no ill effects. We were also in a room filled with tear gas, which is harmless although it causes the eyes to water. We removed our masks in this room just to see what would happen. Masks must be put on in six seconds to pass the test. Within two miles of the trenches masks are kept open and on the breast. Back to six miles

masks are slung on the hips. Sometimes they are worn four or five hours at a time.

I have acquired a lengthy correspondence list so will ask you to pass this letter around since my time here is a bit limited now. Mail will be forwarded if it reaches here after we leave. Write soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our camp had a well equipped "Y" and we made much use of it. Movies were shown once or twice a week and boxing bouts were held on the stage. An outside boxing ring was constructed early in our stay in Belvoir and many bouts were staged. We had several skilled boxers in Company N and occasionally boxers from the main camp were brought in. Ringside was always packed and bets were made. A track and field meet was organized and held on one of our afternoons off. The drill field, the only cleared and level spot in the Belvoir area, became very dusty during dry weather. It was not suitable for baseball. An ancient piano in the "Y" played by Private Meier furnished accompaniment for group singing, which we enjoyed. Meier did not know one note from another, playing entirely by ear.

Passes were not issued except for business reasons and necessary errands. We did have a few men who went out without passes; most of them were caught and penalized with extra duty. On Sundays we could without a pass cross the river on a ferry and visit a Maryland summer resort known as Marshall Hall. Visiting this place at night was strictly forbidden.

Our mailman, Fred Radikopf, acquired a yellow mongrel pup while on a pass to Washington when he was in a main camp regiment. The pup bore the name of "Bevo" and soon became a company favorite and mascot. Daily arrival of the Washington steamer at the boat landing never failed to attract attention and interest. Daily newspapers and canteen supplies came by the steamer as did

occasional visitors. Men from our company in need of hospital attention were sent to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington by this boat as I found out later in an incident that will be described in this narrative.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., July 31, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing again this evening to let you know we are still here. I do not know what delays us. It rained today, and we stayed in our tents all afternoon. I was on guard last night and for that reason was excused this forenoon from drill.

Our tents are not the best in the world, but in spite of leaks we kept dry and have a good time. We have candles for light and it seems quite primitive. Our food is poor; for dinner today we had baked beans with worms. I discovered the worms in time but could eat nothing else, going to the canteen for sardines and crackers. It seems strange to me that food should be so much different from that served in the main camp. It looks as though a screw was loose somewhere or something to that effect, but we manage to get along. Boys who are "broke" are out of luck. We expect our pay within a few days. As yet I have received no pay since entering the service.

Did Wilber receive the paper I sent home? I sent out several papers last Sunday. I manage to draw guard duty regularly now. Our rifle platoon does all the guard duty; there are fifty of us armed with weapons. Guard duty requires the services of twelve men each night. It is bad only when it rains. Two hours in the middle of the night goes slowly, but during the day when you can see what is going on, time passes rapidly.

Yesterday we learned how to pitch our tents. Each man carries a half tent, a pole and five pins. Two men club together and join in constructing the tent. On the march the half tent serves as a water proof cover for the pack. The army is a great place when one gets accustomed to it. I like this company. It is a

unit in the regular service and has an efficient corps of officers with Captain John Cannon in command.

Today a non-com took the names of all those who could operate a typewriter so I may be in for more clerical work. I do not know why I am in this company of mechanics unless it is for clerical duties. I am getting much good drill in the rifle platoon and under emergency conditions engineers do infantry duty. So it is possible that I might get a potshot or two at the enemy, but I doubt it.

I suppose the young fellows in home communities are well weeded out by now. I am sorry for the slackers who managed to dodge. I think they would feel like whipped curs and would be ashamed to appear in public. They are potential allies of Germany.

The proposed change in the "draft" law will lower the age to eighteen and extend upwards to forty or forty-five. Wilber will then be eligible and I am advising that he then enlist in the navy, a very fine and promising branch of military service.

Next spring's campaign should wind up the show in Europe. Our advance guard in France is making wonderful progress, and when our full power is exerted the enemy will feel it.

I hope the church meeting is going well and will be successful in every way. Who is to teach in Palmyra school next year? I am happy to know that Bessie Moore will be in high school. She is an outstanding student and should make a fine record. I hope, too, that Helen Strater gets into high school - she, too, is a good student. These girls are good thinkers and such at their ages are rare.

I am in the best of health and would like nothing more nor better than an opportunity to sit down with you for a good square meal. If ever I get into a town where there is a good restaurant, believe me ------ Love to all,

Gilbert.

During off-duty hours much of our conversation revolved around the subject of food and current rumors. Gradually food improved, but rumors continued rampant. Every day a new report concerning our imminent departure for France went into circulation and after a while we learned to discount rumors and make light of them. Probably the best food joke of all time came to light in early August. Our menu one day called for iced tea. The kitchen force boiled up the tea just before mess call and placed it in a large can at the end of the serving table. Thoughtfully, just before serving, they threw a large lump of ice into the tea; and when we dipped it into our mess cups, it was too hot for drinking. Our sense of humor caused numerous snide remarks to be directed toward those in charge until the mess sergeant became belligerent and threatened to knock off a few "blocks." There was, however, one good result: iced tea thereafter was cool enough to drink comfortably.

We usually had a few minor offenders chopping wood as extra duty. One such miscreant loaded his rifle, strictly forbidden, and accidentally discharged the thing, blowing a hole in his tent roof. A luckless soldier talked back to a sergeant and offered to take him on in combat; he too went to the woodpile. On guard one night we rounded up a group of Negro soldiers who had come to the river to fish and had overstayed. We put them in the guard house, a flimsy tarpaper-covered shack and waited for the officer of the day. When that worthy came, he too was nonplused as to what to do. "Don't watch them too closely and they will solve the problem," he said and went away. The problem was solved by the group cutting a hole in the paper-covered back of the shack where no guards were posted. The Negroes had offered us a fine string of fish to let them go, but they took the fish with them when they escaped.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 3, 1918

Dear Folks: - This is Saturday and we are having a half day off. Company N boys are holding a track and field meet with the nearby medical corps. The heat is so intense that the "Y" porch looks inviting.

This morning we had inspection of rifles, equipment, and uniforms. Quarters were also inspected. Yesterday was payday and the boys are happy. Most of them had been "busted" for weeks and they hardly contain themselves now. I drew $53 and will send some of it home when I can get to the postoffice. In all, I have about $80 and do not care to have as much on me. In so large a group there are always a few who steal.

We enjoy our week ends when there is only necessary work done such as guard and kitchen. Minor offenders usually supply Sunday K.P. Today we had corn on the cob (old), roast beef, mashed potatoes, and tea. The beef was roasted without salt and the potatoes were full of lumps and not cooked enough. I am still hoping for improvement. We still do not understand the delays. The army is very uncertain in many ways, or at least we think so.

I received the Republican News and two Kent papers Friday morning. I passed the Kent papers on to Joe Hanichak, the Kent boy here, and the Mount Vernon papers to Harris and Householder.

You should see my new uniform and overcoat. Uncle Sam is not stingy in clothing us and does not mean to be in feeding us. If I am able to do so, I will have my picture taken in my new uniform and send it to you.

Harvest is probably over now. I am sorry dry weather affected you so much. We have had plenty of rain here and dampness along this river gives us trouble keeping our rifles free from rust.

Have the Knox County boys been reclassified yet? It may be tough on the slackers who have escaped up to this time. How is the sale of stamps going?

We hear that the 4th Liberty Loan opens September 28. Must close and see how the track meet is progressing. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 4, 1918

Dear Folks: - I received a permit this morning to go to the postoffice in the main camp. I am enclosing a money order for $50 which will pay up the amount you advanced me when I left Camp Sherman. I have $30 remaining at hand, sufficient until we are paid again. I am also purchasing a souvenir I will send you soon. It is a service pin bearing the castle emblem of the Engineer Corps.

I stopped at the "Y" I used to visit when I was in the 3rd Regiment to write this letter. Sunday school is in progress now, but I decided I had better write while opportunity beckoned.

It is very sultry and hot, which in this climate usually precedes rain. Following rain, the atmosphere gets cool and comfortable, staying that way through the night and sometimes the following day. Nights here are fine for sleeping and blankets are necessary. We keep our tent flaps rolled up, and it is the same as sleeping out of doors. When on guard at night, I always sleep outside the guard house, which is small. I do this, of course, when off duty and the weather is clear. I take my cot and blanket along as do others. This is a great life in spite of several discomforts. Must close and get back to Belvoir. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our mail orderly, Fred Radikopf, had errands to do in connection with his work and accompanied me. Fred was a popular man in camp and owned the dog Bevo, our mascot. He was a skilled boxer and often engaged in bouts in our outdoor ring. I never saw him defeated by an opponent. Ben Smallman and George Watson

were among several other boxers who entertained us with their skill. Watson had fought professionally before entering military service. Both Radikopf and Smallman now attend our Regimental reunions and I enjoy fellowship with them.

Our Company officers were Captain John Cannon, 1st Lieutenant Hunter McClure, 2nd Lieutenant Turner Smith, 1st Lieutenant William Bruckman, 2nd Lieutenant E. Soderstrom, and 2nd Lieutenant C. A. Anderson. Cannon and Anderson never attained a high degree of popularity in the Company, but the others were highly respected and well liked. Bruckman and Smith attend our Regimental reunions and still maintain a high degree of interest in the men formerly under their command. McClure died shortly after our arrival in France. In so far as we now know, the others are either dead or whereabouts unknown. Sixty survivors of Company N are now members of the 21st Light Railway Society, and many attend the annual reunions.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 7, 1918

Dear Folks: - Is it hot in Ohio now? Temperature passed 100 here yesterday and will go as high again today. They have let up on drill in the afternoon now and give us lectures instead. Last night we had a big time at the "Y" with all kinds of entertainment for the company.

Just now I am waiting for the boat to Washington and am bound for the Base Hospital. My glasses need repairs, thus the trip to the base. I hope they fit me up with the regulation military glasses, small lenses and bows. My glasses are unsatisfactory in army life. I hope also to have a look around in the city while there.

I have never experienced hotter weather than that of the last few days. We have a number of heat prostrations in our company, and we do hope the time to go over comes soon. We are getting sick of this place. The trip to Washington will help relieve things for me.

I received my Kent paper yesterday. It carried an item stating that four candidates received degrees at Commencement July 26; only three being present, the fourth, Roberts, being somewhere between Kent and France, and the audience applauded. My college papers should soon come to you. Must close and get down to that boat. Love to all,

Gilbert.

While in a training company in the 4th Regiment, I had an unforgetable experience with an irate Irish ex-policeman drill sergeant and an illiterate Russian immigrant who had in some way turned up in the army. The drill master became very angry when Ivan messed up every turn in the drills and finally when a halt was called turned to me with this inquiry: "Warn't youse a school teacher before getting into this damned army? Answer me, yes or no." I replied in the affirmative and waited for the next volley which came immediately. "Take this dumb ox over to that shade tree and teach him to read and understand English." I followed instructions in so far as the tree was concerned, and we sat down until another halt was called. Approaching "Pat," who by that time was smiling, I explained that I would need a few materials, books, etc., and a lot of time. Replied the son of Old Erin," To hell with it. Take him to the kitchen and let him scrub pans. Let the mess sergeant worry with him. Now beat it and get back as soon as yez can." And Ivan became a permanent K.P. and I came back and resumed drill. "Pat" did not forget me and often went out of his way to help me learn some of the intricacies of drill. He was a good teacher.

Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C., August 8, 1918

Dear Folks: - For the first time in my life I am in a hospital other than as a visitor. I am having some rare experiences; being in good health, I am permitted to wander about the grounds at will. I played checkers today with a man

who lost an arm and part of his vision in combat. There are more than 200 overseas patients here now, and several are seated near me now. Some have lost legs or arms but are able to get around or move in wheel chairs.

Books and papers do not tell the story as these men can who were in combat. The stories of atrocities and crimes committed by the enemy rival those of fiction. These men can paint a realistic picture of war as it is. When recovery is complete, they will be sent home. Excellent care is given here and patients are treated well.

Food here is good, but on account of crowded conditions one must wait in line a long time to be served. I am told there are 1700 patients in the hospital, and more are coming in every day.

We had a nice trip on the Potomac and passed the Washington home on the way. The old home is a beautiful place; I hope sometime to visit it. I am anxious to see Washington City, and above all I hope Company N is still in camp when I get back to it. Troops are going over in large numbers now, and it is reported that we have over a million men in France. Never has a nation marshalled such a host from civilian life in such a short time as has ours.

I have observed the Red Cross at work and those workers are veritable angels of mercy. Hope you are all well and standing up under the hot weather. It was 105 degrees in the hospital at seven o'clock. Must close now and get in line. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Little did I know what a comedy of errors I was setting in motion when I asked for repairs to my glasses. With green and untrained men in charge of details, many errors can be made and some due to sheer stupidity. The commentary following the next letter tells the story which years later shows several humorous aspects, but at the time there was nothing "funny" about the episode. I kept the

real story out of my letters concerning how I left the hospital; legal, yes; irregular, yes. I was told to keep still about it, and I did for many years. Friends may be found in unexpected places, and I found this to be true in Walter Reed Hospital.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 11, 1918

Dear Folks: - I received your letters yesterday and today and am happy to hear you are taking a much needed vacation. I can imagine Fred's greeting when he sees you, "Great Caesar's ghost," as he always says when surprised. I will write to Fred presently. He has a heart of gold even if his head is a bit giddy at times.

The oats crop turned out well. I hope rain comes in time to help corn and potatoes. We had a downpour here Wednesday night and another last night. We had to put all our stuff on our beds to keep it from swimming away. We have board floors, but the water blows under the tent flaps. My side of the tent did not leak but a few drops, while the fellow on the other side had to put up his shelter tent to keep his bed dry.

We had to move about in our tents yesterday due to a quarantine over many of our men. The doctors discovered two cases of measles and have divided the camp into two sections, one for those who have had the disease and one for those who have not. If it is really measles, we may be further delayed. We are denied passes to leave our three-acre camp, and drill is becoming very monotonous. The "Y" is a godsend, but even so we would like to get out. Wilber Foote entered the army after I did, and he has beaten me to France.

I came back from the hospital Friday afternoon after having a difficult time getting out. I finally made it and had to pay my own way back to Humphreys. A few days in Walter Reed would have driven me crazy, especially with the prospect of my company leaving without me. The hospital is a fine place for sick and

wounded men, but no place for one who is well and able to drill eight hours a day.

While waiting for a street car outside the hospital, I talked with a boy who had fought at St. Quentin, one of the worst battles of the war, and he had lost an arm. It happened last March and April when the Germans broke through the British lines and drove toward Paris. This man was in an engineering outfit serving behind the British lines. Men threw down their picks and shovels, picked up their rifles and fought a rear-guard action while the British were reforming their lines, thus earning the name of "fighting engineers."

Earl has been fortunate in getting passes to come home. He will probably go over with the 84th Division. I am sorry to hear that Frank Thornburg does not like the army; dislike only makes things worse.

I had time in Washington to walk the length of Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol but not enough time to go inside the latter. Washington is full of soldiers and officers, and I was told to be out of the city by sundown, and I was. I had an excellent meal in a good restaurant; it was a real treat after lumpy potatoes, half raw meat, and hot lemonade. I was disappointed in Pennsylvania Avenue as I had it pictured as much nicer and cleaner that I found it. Euclid Avenue in Cleveland has it beaten by a mile.

I took a car to Alexandria and had a seat with a Civil War Confederate veteran, who had fought under General Lee and was with him at the surrender. He had two sons in France and was sorry he could not go himself. From Alexandria I took passage in a jitney and for seventy-five cents was landed in front of our headquarters and then walked to Belvoir.

We have a new commander now, Brigadier General Kutz, just back from France. Humphreys is constantly growing larger and there are now over 20,000 men in camp with more coming daily. Trees are falling rapidly and tents are being utilized as temporary shelters.

Did my life certificate come with the diploma? It should read: Four Year

Provisional Certificate, (High School). Must close now. Love to all,

Gilbert.

A clerk's blunder sent me to the hospital as a patient. When I arrived there, my clotnes were taken from me, and I was given a hospital gown and slippers. I was ordered into bed, and a nurse came to take my temperature and give me instructions how to behave as a patient. I was permitted to get in line for the evening meal and wait for bedtime in a large waiting room. The nurse returned for another check after we had gone to bed. Next morning temperatures was checked again, and after protests I was given liberty of the grounds until my turn for examination came. It was evident by this time that I was not sick or wounded. That gown and those slippers did injure my pride, and I found that I was in the eye, ear, and throat ward, surrounded by patients who really were sick and wounded. Several men were recuperating from operations. I waited impatiently for my name to be called for examination and finally next morning my turn came. I used the waiting time playing checkers with patients, reading, and walking about the place.

A first lieutenant in the medical corps questioned me concerning my transfer to the hospital and reasons why such action was carried out. When I told him my story about repair of glasses, he broke out laughing and made a few choice remarks about dumb clerks and military red tape. He then called in his superior officer, a captain, and the two of them laughed and made other and pointed remarks. Both men had been commissioned directly into the army and were without previous military experience. I was informed that the glasses could be repaired in fifteen minutes in any establishment where glasses are fitted, and to such a place I should have been sent. My heart sank when I was informed that patients were sent back to Humphreys only once in a week or ten

days. The whole matter seemed a huge joke to the officers, but I was not in a joking mood.

Using my eyes, I discovered that both men were members of a large fraternal organization in which I had membership and I so informed them. Seriousness replaced laughter; and when I appealed for help in getting out, they promised to do all they possibly could and said they would call me next morning. I went back to the ward and was put to work pushing a cleaning brush, a welcome diversion. The ward nurse knew by this time that I was either a nuisance, a mistake, or both in that ward and acted accordingly. So the day and night went by slowly.

Next morning the officers called for me as they had promised. "We have things fixed up downstairs. Here is a discharge slip. Use it to get your clothes, show it to the ward nurse, present it to the provost guard in the lobby and he will stamp it as a pass to get out; now farewell and good luck." I thanked my new friends and moved toward the clothes department. Here the flunky discovered I had lost the slippers enroute and demanded that I find them. I started to retrace my steps and saw outside an examining room a whole line of slippers. I stepped into a pair and returned for my clothes. The ward nurse nodded assent, and the provost, who was in on the deal, stamped my pass and told me to get moving fast before he changed his mind.

Forty years later my nephew, Lawrence DeBolt, became assistant adjutant in Walter Reed Hospital, and at his invitation I revisited the place. I had a personally conducted tour, and at the end we visited the record room. Lawrence had heard my story, and both of us were eager to see how the record read concerning my admission and dismissal. It simply stated that I entered (date), left (date).

Did I get a repair job on the glasses? Yes, in a Pennsylvania Avenue shop at a cost of twenty-five cents, half price because I was in uniform.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 15, 1918

Dear Brother: - Your letter came yesterday and was handed to me at noon mail call. Since I had not written home for nearly a week, I am replying at once. I have been so busy this week that I can hardly find time for anything extra. After letting us off easy for three afternoons, the officers began drilling us again full time. We are at it - 8:00-11:30 and 1:00-5:00, with very little rest thrown in. Clothes must be washed and rifles cleaned after drill time. The heat has been bad until today when it eased up considerably.

We fellows are getting sick of so much drill on the same old things. I hope sincerely that it doesn't last much longer. We have shows put on in the evenings by a few boxers who do not drill. The whole company is compelled to go, the fellows being too tired to do otherwise. A strenuous life, yes, and one I will be glad to see pass in distance. We would be willing to charge the kaiser's best troops with handspikes to get out of here. No passes are given and stay here we must.

We have our little overseas caps now and they sit on the tops of our heads offering little protection from the sun. However we are proud of our little caps; they make us look like real Sammies. We also have the wrapped or spiral leggings. We are sure the kaiser would quit at once if he could see us in our full equipment. We have a lot of fun even if the drill is intensive and the sun hot. The good old "Y" helps us along. We saw "The Beast of Berlin" a few nights ago, a very good and new picture. We have swims in the Potomac and our shower bath is excellent even though its roof is the sky. Our food is improving slowly.

I didn't think Jack McNutt would last long in the army. Take away the "Mc" and you have what the army missed getting. There are several nutty guys like him here and we wish they were somewhere else.

I hope Dad and Paul purchase a tractor. It will be needed whether or not you go to the army. I do not think you will ever see active service although you may have plenty of training in camp. REMEMBER, there are to be no exemption claims. I do not wish to see anyone go from our home under protest. The war may end next spring or in early summer, but I have no hopes of getting home for a long time. It will take a long time to transport the armies home and keep necessary commerce going at the same time. Write soon and give me the news. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 17, 1918

Dear Folks: - It is 3:30 Saturday afternoon and we are off duty until Monday morning. Many of us are either catching up with correspondence or washing clothes. As I explained in my last letter we have not had much time during the week for either. I just awoke a few minutes ago from a nap that lasted from 10:30 this morning. I was on guard last night and after standing inspection this morning turned in. Dinner time passed unnoticed.

At our inspection this morning we were first marched to the parade grounds where our rifles were examined. Yesterday we turned in our old rifles and received new ones. The new rifles were covered with grease and made us much work getting them ready for inspection. A first lieutenant (McClure) inspected my platoon and we all passed. We next went to our tents and deposited our rifles, belts, and bayonets with our packs, which had been previously prepared on our beds. The officers then passed down the company streets and inspected tents and equipment while we stood outside at attention. Medical examination followed. Our measles scare is over; those suspected were only suffering from prickly heat.

Discipline is strict here and must be under conditions prevailing. At the last court-martial one fellow received fifteen days' hard labor for accidentally

discharging his rifle in a tent. Another received two months' hard labor and forfeiture of part of his pay for the same period for talking back to his superior officer. He had offered to lick all the sergeants. He is a Kentucky mountaineer and can be dangerous when aroused. Another man received a month's hard labor and a forfeiture for refusing a corporal's command to pick up a scrap of paper. And still another received 60 hours' hard labor for talking back and an additional eight hours for being late at reveille.

I am sending by the same mail a picture made at our boxing arena. You can easily find me near the right side and fourth from the end. The fellow in the ring, second from the left and holding a pail, is one of Ohio's best boxers, George Watson of Newark. Both boxers are sergeants. The man in the middle is our first sergeant. The officers' quarters are to the right in the tents, and I was on guard there last night. Captain Cannon is the middle man in the group seated on the left on a bench. This is the best I could do in the way of a pictures.

Hope you are all well and love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 20, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your letter enclosing the pictures came yesterday morning. The pictures from home are very good and I am happy to have them. Earl Welker looks fine and every inch a soldier. Wilber looks like a Fifth-Avenue-New-York swell in that "Palm Beacher" and it fits him well. The colt has grown and I think breaking it to the halter a good thing while young and small. I recognized the exact spot in Welkers' yard where the pictures were made. I could see the old cider apple tree across the B & O tracks in the background. I will send the pictures home before I leave here.

You should have the picture I sent by this time. I will send others if I

get more of them. I do not have my pen with me and have to borrow a pencil, which is an unfamiliar tool to me. Perhaps you can decipher this letter in a good light.

Yesterday and today we finished work by taking hikes, thus relieving the monotony of drill and welcomed by all. Tomorrow we have a big boxing show and Company N has challenged any company in the big camp. One of them is coming down to prove which has the better men.

What is wrong that Palmyra keeps getting stung on preachers? The days of old time evangelism are rapidly passing. I am sorry to hear that Fife and Son failed as I had hoped the meeting would be a success. Personally I am opposed to evangelistic revival meetings. A term in the army proves the place and importance of practical religion. Our "Y" here is a real and working church. Preachers can talk their heads off about baptism, repentance, etc., but it remains for workers to "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" by doing, instead of talking, or telling someone else to do it. Real religion consists of service to man. As I understand it, real salvation is the saving of one's self for greater and better activity among men, the greatest possible service to the Unseen Power. Things that come after mortal life will take care of themselves. People should not forget to "Act in the living present," rather than to pin their faith too much on something afar off and at best shadowy and highly imaginative.

I am enclosing a copy of our camp songs. Try to get the music and pass them along to the members of my Sunday-school class. The home folk will like the songs we sing. We have a few, of course, that would not pass muster in polite society. Must close now. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 24, 1918

Dear Folks: - You probably think we have left Humphreys since I have not written for several days. Not so. They have been working us like the devil, and I simply could not write until now, Saturday afternoon. My correspondence is sadly in arrears. We go on the field at 7:30 and with time out for dinner and a bit of rest we go on until 5:00. The longer we stay the harder we work.

On Wednesday we turned out for a boxing show and last night the company went up to the big camp for a match between our champion and one of the top fighters there. Our champion and prize boxer is George Watson of Newark, Ohio. I had picked up some blisters in drilling and was excused from going. The leader of the first platoon, Lt. McClure, a fine Southern gentleman and officer, excused me and told me to find a shady spot and take things easy. The dispensary gave me some dope this morning that fixed me up in good shape. We had our usual inspection this morning but will have this afternoon and tomorrow off, thank heaven! It takes hard drilling to make good soldiers, but with nothing else mixed in things get tough. I am not complaining. We signed the payroll again yesterday.

This week we have had infantry drill as usual, tent pitching, rifle practice, and hikes. We enjoy the hikes more than anything else. There is much discontent among the men arising from the restrictions with which we are surrounded. A few 36-hour passes would go far in straightening things out. Time is going rapidly even though we are confined to this small spot along the river.

It is almost time for the new school year to begin. If the war were over, I would be planning my work for the year. I will lose no time when it is over in getting into some up-to-date high school and getting back into the harness I laid aside last May.

I received a letter from Prof. Olson yesterday, and he is thinking of enter-

ing the army service. He can get a commission but hesitated because it calls for work only in this country, Hope to hear from you soon. Love to all,

Gilbert

Prof. Olson went to Case School in Cleveland to teach and receive instruction in artillery practice, but the war ended before he made much progress in the latter. He was one of my favorite teachers in Kent State and a lifelong friend.

Camp A. A. Humphreys, Va., August 24, 1918

Dear Mother: - After writing to you earlier today, I received a letter from you. I thought it would be best to answer your questions at once before a slip of mind caused me to forget. We have many things to keep in mind and slips easily occur. Since writing the other letter we have stood "retreat," and perhaps I should explain. We assemble in "company, front" at the sound of "Assembly." The first sergeant orders "Fall in" and we come to attention at "Order arms." He then calls the roll and turns to the commanding officer who stands back of him, salutes, and reports that all are present or accounted for. The officer returns the salute and tells him to take his post which is behind the third man in the rear rank. Announcements are made at this time. At six o'clock sharp the bugle sounds, and we stand at "parade rest" while it plays the "retreat" call. The position of "parade rest" is assumed by placing the right foot about six inches to the rear of the left with the left knee slightly bent, the rifle turned on the toe of the butt and the barrel clasped below the upper ring with the left hand above the right. When the bugle ceases, we come to attention; and to "present arms" when the "Colors" is being played, or if a band is present, "The Star-Spangled Banner." At the same time the flag is lowered. It is a very impressive ceremony if all goes well. The only trouble here is with the bugler. He plays so poorly that it makes the music a joke.

After retreat we had supper of hash, cornstarch pudding, bread and butter,

pears, lemonade and half of a pickle. Our food has improved very much recently. A cook was fired a few days ago; this may account for the change.

The sweater fitted perfectly, but I am sorry to say I do not have it now. A week ago an order was issued for all sweaters to be turned in and boxed for shipment. We put our names on our property and have promises to have it returned when we get "over there." Baggage had to be cut down in quantity. All we own must be carried on our backs in packs. I have an overcoat, blankets, socks, towels, handkerchiefs, razor, toilet articles, tent pole, tent pins, half a shelter tent, raincoat, bacon and condiment cans, rope, and mess kit. In addition to all this, we carry an extra pair of shoes, ammunition belt, canteen, first-aid pouch, bayonet, and rifles. When we get over, a pick and shovel will be added. In weight we will carry about sixty pounds. We also have an extra suit of underwear and an extra shirt.

I do not think now of anything I want from home other than my watch and a box of razor blades. The package should be registered and insured to assure delivery if it comes after we move. We are seeing a movie tonight and the music has started. A cool breeze is blowing and I feel fine. Love to all,

Gilbert.

This letter was the last written from Camp Humphreys. The next one was written on board the transport Great Northern.

A SECOND INTERLUDE

In spite of hot weather, hard work, and a number of unpleasant experiences, I developed a liking for the army during the six weeks I spent in Camp A. A. Humphreys. Regular and disciplined living in the great outdoors brought me a degree of good health I needed, and I made many fine friends among the men with whom I was associated. There were several men in Company N with whom I had made acquaintance in the 4th Training Regiment and who were transferred with me. Almost every state in the Union was represented in our company. We were eager and anxious to get on our way to a destination as yet undisclosed. Several battalions of the 21st Engineers had preceded us and long since taken their places at or near the front lines. The regiment built, maintained, and operated railroads, both standard and narrow gauge, and we were headed for assignment with the latter.

On August 27 it became evident that a move on Company N's part was imminent. Packing started in earnest, and mail service outward bound ceased. Early on the morning of August 28 we were ordered to pack our personal belongings and strike our tents since the spot was no longer to be used for camping. Late in the afternoon we marched up the hill to the railroad, which by now was located in the main camp, and trucks carried our company baggage and equipment. We immediately boarded a special train and within a few minutes Camp A. A. Humphreys faded in the distance. Box lunches were placed on board in Baltimore, and we continued north. After delays in railroad yards, we arrived in Jersey City while it was still dark and boarded ferry boats that landed us at Hoboken, our port of embarkation. This was a complete surprise as we expected to spend a few days in one of the embarkation camps near a port. The Red Cross fed us on the docks at Hoboken and by this time day had appeared and we had our first glimpse of our transport, the Great Northern, as she lay dockside. We filled out cards telling

of our safe arrival in France and addressed them to our homes. These cards would be mailed as soon as the safe arrival of our ship was signaled from France. Here is a copy of the card:

THE SHIP ON WHICH I SAILED HAS ARRIVED SAFELY OVERSEAS.

Name - Gilbert Roberts

Organization - Company N. 21st Engineers.

The card was addressed to Mother and arrived in due time. We were six days in crossing the Atlantic.

A careful check was made as we marched up the gangplank; we were on our way.

Concealed under a raincoat, our mascot Bevo eluded the watchful eyes of the guards at the gangplank and was successfully smuggled aboard. Bevo's full story appears in our company history. The transport was capable of carrying 8000 men, their equipment, and a large quantity of freight. We were assigned bunks in troop compartments under closely crowded conditions. In some compartments the bunks were in sections three high and in some four. Company N occupied one of the former. Blue lights furnished feeble illumination in aisles and on stairways. Water taps were conveniently located, and we were ordered to keep our canteens filled and attached to our belts. Submarine warfare was at its height, and from the very first we were trained in safety and abandon ship tactics. We spent two days in training before leaving harbor. Each man had an assigned post on deck and near a lifeboat. While in the submarine zone, we took our stations before dawn and held them until day was well advanced.

Meals were served in troop dining rooms. We used our mess kits and ate standing up at tables suspended from the ceiling. We spent our idle time either in our bunks or on deck. The ship was armed, and we spent much time watching the gun crews practicing. Seasickness was a common ailment and I suffered along with a majority of our men when we struck rough water. We were six days making the crossing and landed at Brest. We left New York on August 31

at three o'clock p.m. The first night out was warm, and many of us slept on deck; but after leaving the Gulf Stream we had rough sailing and cold weather.

Two days out of Brest we wakened in the morning and found ourselves surrounded by twelve navy destroyers protecting us from submarines. Apparently a submarine did try to strike us. Our gun crews started firing at a spot in the sea while destroyers closed in and dropped a depth charge, which shook our ship from stem to stern, alarming men below deck. I was on deck and saw the whole proceeding, too sick to be scared. After landing in Brest, we learned that the transport Mount Vernon, outward bound, had been torpedoed and damaged only the day before we reached the spot. The Mount Vernon had returned to Brest and we saw her there.

Company N men helped unload cargo before boarding lighters for the dock. We marched five miles uphill most of the way to Camp Pontanezan where we were quartered in an old stone barracks built in 1680 for French troops and continued in use ever since. Lacking enough cots, I was bedded down on the stone floor and was reminded of Thornburg's remark at Sherman that drew the sergeant's wrath. Even so, we were much better placed than thousands who had to put up their pup tents in muddy fields. My first letter from France follows one written on board the transport.

The following letter was written on board the transport and passed censorship. We had been told what not to write.

New York, N. Y., August 29, 1918

Dear Folks: - I received your last letter and one from Clara and Burr yesterday. I would have enjoyed that dinner with you. Fried ham and apple sauce are almost forgotten dreams with me now. Perhaps your table is not up to pre-war standards, but it would be preferable to army chow such as I have been eating. And the associations if nothing else!

I have bidden Humphreys farewell and hope I do not get sent back there. The past month there was very hot and uncomfortable. Perhaps I will run across Earl and Thornburg sometime in my own travels. I have not heard from them for a long time. I lost Earl's address the last time we traded tents at Belvoir. My papers and letters blew away.

I just finished supper, and we had macaroni and cheese, minced ham, tea and bread. For dinner we had the finest beef stew I ever tasted. I was very hungry, not having had a full meal since yesterday noon. The Red Cross served us coffee and rolls this morning.

You will hear that I have arrived safely as soon as I get there. Do not expect a letter too soon as the mails are slow and uncertain. I will write as often as I can, and I know you will do likewise. I will be busy but will not forget the home folk. I hope Dad and Wilber have a good time at the state fair. I would enjoy it too. I saw the Statue of Liberty this morning and some of the highest buildings in the world.

I have both gained and lost weight in the army. When I was ill at Camp Shirley, I lost a few pounds as I did for a time at Belvoir, but now I am back where I usually am in summer. When you write now, address me as follows:

Pvt. Gilbert Roberts

Company N, 21st Engineers Regiment, A.E.F.

Must close now. Love to all,

Gilbert.

I was seasick four days out of six required for crossing. My rations did not cost the army much on this trip.

On board ship, September __, 1918

Dear Folks: - I do not know when this letter will reach you, and it may arrive sooner than the one I shall write when I land in France. You have probably

received the notice that was mailed from the port of embarkation stating that I had arrived safely.

I have not enjoyed the trip very much. I was seasick the first two days and after a brief interval became sick again. The fishes lived well off me. I can't describe the feeling of seasickness; there is nothing serious about it, but still one feels like dying. One simply does not care whether the world comes or goes or no. The next voyage may not affect me at all.

The sea is about as I had imagined it. As far as one can see, there is a vast expanse of rolling water; and the ship rolls too, and so do our stomachs. I can imagine how the navigators of old felt when they became lost out here. I am ready to welcome France and the French.

A trip on a transport at best is not a joy ride. The fellows who keep well have some good times. The whole experience is worth while and must be undergone if we are to win the war.

Earl is probably on his way too. When you can get his address from his parents, please send it to me and Wilber Foote's too. Must close now as I do not feel much like writing, and there is nothing more that I can write that will pass censorship. Tell the folk to write and don't worry. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our transport, Great Northern, was in a convoy of three, the others being North Pacific and Leviathan. These three ships were the fastest in transport service. The first two were former Pacific Ocean liners and the last named was an Atlantic liner seized from Germany when war was declared, it being in New York harbor at the time. All three survived the war and brought thousands of soldiers home. Through sheer coincidence Company N came home on the same transport that took the boys over. Having left the company in March, 1919, I did not return with my comrades. Outside the submarine zones this convoy sailed without destroyer protection.

Somewhere in France, September 9, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am in France at last and making most of my first opportunity to write. We are glad to be here. Our preliminary training has now ended, and we are ready to get down to real business. The whole thing seems like a dream to me, and often I think I am about to wake up and find myself in Camp Humphreys.

Believe me, there is a vast difference between France and the United States. French civilization, being much older than ours, is less susceptible to changes. We seldom see active young or even middle-aged men here. Old men, women, and children are to be seen in fields and industries. When we landed, our line of march was constantly besieged by women and children, both as beggars and peddlers. Excellent grapes and nuts are on sale as well as candy of inferior grade. I sampled both grapes and candy. The children speak enough English to beg for cigarettes and matches as well as for coins.

Houses here are built of stone or brick and by their appearance date back to the days of Columbus. Roads are of stone and in fair condition. Our barracks were used by Napoleon's soldiers. Water is scarce for drinking and very scarce for washing. The whole affair measures up to descriptions sent back by men who preceded us. I was on detail to help unload the ship, so was quite tired when we reached camp. There being no cots, we slept on the floor and no one complained. We are where we wanted to go and are getting our first taste of campaigning.

Our cooks busied themselves at once, and we soon had a good supper of bread, canned beef, and coffee. The bread is different from that supplied us in Camp Humphreys. It is composed of wheat flour and other cereals and is good.

This morning after a hot and appetizing breakfast we went out to look around, keeping in touch with our quarters. The "Y" is roomy and comfortable and the air outside is damp and cold. It rains here almost every day, not hard but in the form of a fine mist. We have prospect of a good dinner before long, and I saw the cooks cutting up a quarter of beef.

The fields here are small and fenced with hedge. Every inch possible is cultivated. I made purchases in a French canteen where values are computed in francs. It seems a bit odd, but we will soon become accustomed.

Writing will be a bit difficult for a while so pass my letters round and tell the folk to write. I will answer when I can. Love to all,

Gilbert.

P.S. We brought our little terrier mascot with us. Bevo by name.

Somewhere in France, September 14, 1918

Dear Folks: - Having spent a half hour in line waiting for writing paper, I decided that home is the best place of all. Writing material is not plentiful here. In America we simply helped ourselves, but here a secretary hands it out, two envelopes and two sheets of paper per man. I am using my bunk as a desk and will do my best in producing a readable manuscript.

It is raining as usual, a slow and chilly drizzle. It has rained every day except one since we came here. I would not trade the side of the worst hill in Knox County for the whole province around here; however, all France is not to be judged by this sample.

We have been hiking over the country, and the fields surprised me when I thought of the almost daily rainfall. Fields are small and surrounded by hedges growing on raised banks of earth. People here could teach Americans how to make garden. We waste most of our garden space between rows. Here every inch is utilized. Cows look as though they were polished each morning and appear well fed. There is an abundance of dogs, which roam at large.

I saw a narrow-gauge railroad the other day that reminded me of the scenic railroad at Cedar Point. From its appearance it would seem necessary for passengers to get out and push on sharp curves or hills. I often wish Earl were here with his observations; they would be well worth hearing. Population is so dense here that things pass unnoticed that would not be tolerated at home. We

are continually being surprised by local customs and institutions.

Small villages smell like an Ohio barnyard. Some houses are so arranged that people live in one end and the live stock in the other, with the hay above and a big manure pile reposing in front.

Corn must be falling before the knife at home by this time. I hope crops turn out well. The Allies need every grain possible to help win this war. When I get home again, I hope to have time to work on the farm before going back to my regular employment.

I can use razor blades and will appreciate a box of them. So far I have been unable to purchase them here and my supply is running low. Must close now and turn to other duties. Love to all,

Gilbert.

P.S. I am well and eager to get on with the war.

Somewhere in France, September 23, 1918

Dear Folks: - Having a little time to myself, I thought at once of home and a letter you are waiting for. I last wrote about a week ago, and you may receive several in the same mail. Mail goes out at intervals and does not travel as it does at home. I am well and contented, having arrived at last where real work begins.

Since last writing, we moved from one camp to another. The move was made in box cars in which we rode in close quarters. The train did not move at express speed and the journey became very tiresome, although we did enjoy the scenery. French box cars are small and resemble wagons more than anything else. Each car is marked as being built to accommodate 40 hommes (men) or 8 chevaux (horses). When we lay down to sleep, I couldn't help laughing at the resemblance to the way we took pigs to market at home.

French locomotives are in a class of wonders of the world, some having no cabs to protect the crew and others resembling circus wagons. These locomotives make good time on good railroads. Uncle Sam has brought over American engines that look like the real stuff and make people sit up and take notice.

It has rained most of the time today and "sunny France" so far has seemed a huge joke. We are quartered in an alfalfa field that is a sea of mud. French mud resembles soap, and one can easily become well acquainted with the soil. We have roofs over our heads and no reasons for complaint. Knee-deep mud is the rule at the front and many other places.

What do you hear of other fellows in camp or over here? Have the numbers in the new registration been drawn yet? I will be happy indeed to have news from home. Do not forget to tell me the names of nominees for state offices. How is school progressing in Fredericktown? Frank Thornburg is no doubt badly missed. Kent State is in session again and I am still thinking about Chicago University when I get out of the army. Did the Robisons send you the money for my typewriter?

Supper time is coming up so will close. I would like to tell you where I am located but cannot. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Somewhere in France, October 1, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am spending this evening at the "Y" after a busy day. The room is well filled with fellows, some playing basketball, some checkers and quiet games, and a larger number writing. The supply of paper is short tonight as you can see from the kind I am using. The "Y" people are doing their best to serve us. We have movies three times a week, and other forms of entertainment fill in the other four. Company N put on a show last week. The "Y" has a canteen where the boys can buy tobacco, etc., at low prices. The "Y" is our evening

rallying place, and we would be lost without it.

I have two days each week for rest, the extra day being gained by overtime. I spend part of the time getting my clothes and equipment cleaned up and the remainder I can go for hikes among the beautiful hills nearby, read, write, or sleep. There are a number of places of historical interest near us and I am planning to visit them when I can and make a few notes. The whole of France is rich in contributions to history, and to one who has carefully studied its history as I have, there is much to see and appreciate. I hope to visit Paris, but just now that is out and for good reasons.

Can you imagine me in the role of a railroader? It is quite a jump from library and classroom, but I do like it; however, I do not care to follow railroading after the war. Our railroad is not much like the Baltimore and Ohio at home. What do you think of the progress of the war? Uncle Sam is just beginning to fight; watch him.

I would like some interesting magazines such as American, Popular Mechanics, Illustrated World, Short Stories, Independent, Outlook, etc. We are short in magazines here and I will pass them along to the "Y" reading table. I miss my reading very much.

When Wilber gets a few snapshots of the kids, I would like prints. Pictures of familiar faces and scenes are welcome any time. I am sorry we are not permitted to have cameras here. In the immediate future I will send you a copy of our army paper, the Stars and Stripes.

To date, I have received no mail and am waiting patiently for I know it is on the way somewhere and will be very welcome. The paper supply has given out so will close. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Note - This letter was written on both sides of a sheet of paper with no wasted spaces. The shortage was soon overcome.

Company N spent ten days in Brest and several of our number became ill. While camping in the barracks at Pontanezan, we first heard of the epidemic of influenza then raging in Europe and spreading to America. I was a member of a work detail sent down to the docks to help lay a short length of standard gauge track. While engaged in this work, we encountered several sailors from the Mount Vernon, to which reference has been made in this narrative. From the sailors we heard a graphic account of the disaster and near escape from a watery grave. Pontanezan was badly crowded, and we were happy to receive moving orders. Taking our places in the "40 and 8's," we embarked on a journey that was to last four days and three nights.

Five squads, a sergeant, and a bugler, forty-two men in all, occupied the car to which I was assigned. Room had to be made for our rifles and packs. We also took aboard rations consisting of canned tomatoes, corned-beef hash, canned beans, and bread. Occasional stops were made enroute for hot coffee. These stops enabled us to replenish our canteens with water and visit latrines. Sleeping was a problem compounded by frequent stops, jerks, and uneven tracks. Long and continued service had worn the car wheels to uneven surfaces which caused bumping no end. Only sheer exhaustion brought sleep to most of us. To a man, we felt sorry for the "8 chevaux" who, from the smell of the car, must have been in occupancy not long before. We traveled slowly and spent most of the nights in railroad yards, keeping out of the way of ammunition and supply trains bound for the front under emergency orders. Our train dodged around Paris but did pass through Tours, Issurtile and Nevers, both large supply centers. On a straight-away run, only a few hours would have sufficed for covering the distance. Tempers and patience became strained to the point of breaking and on the last day an old battered passenger coach was attached to the train and a few men from each car assigned to it. While passing near a base hospital at Neuf-Chateau

only twenty miles from our destination, our mascot, the immortal Bevo, jumped off the train, thus adding grief and discomfiture to his owner and friends. And so we arrived.

We left the train at Gondrecourt and marched to the nearby village of Abainville where the company was destined to remain until spring. Light railway assembly and repair shops were in operation at Abainville, and we were assigned to newly constructed barracks equipped with double-decker bunks and crude sheet-iron stoves. Floors were sod with grass still growing. Gondrecourt was a sizable French town near which American troops had trained in the early months of 1917-18. General headquarters were located in Chaumont, not far distant. About two and a half miles separated Gondrecourt and Abainville. A light or narrow gauge rail line ran from the standard gauge tracks at Abainville northward to the front, which, at the time of our arrival, was about twenty-five miles distant. At a half-way point lay the village of Sorcy and another junction of standard and narrow-gauge tracks. The villages of Houdlaincourt and Bonnet were both only a few miles from Abainville. Through the village of Abainville ran a small river tributary of the larger Meuse. As Company N History contains a full description of the village, I will not repeat it here.

Our barracks compound included three dormitories, a mess hall with attached kitchen, and a combined supply room and company headquarters. The "Y" was located nearby, the whole not far distant from the shops and rail yards. Camp headquarters and Salvation Army buildings were within easy reach and several crushed limestone roads and paths relieved the otherwise expanse of mud. Rubber boots were issued immediately, and we soon learned of their necessity. Lt. Colonel Robertson, an old-time railroader and picturesque character, was in command of the camp. On the morning after our arrival we were lined up and, after instructions given by Captain Cannon, were assigned to duty. Not being a

mechanic, I was given a job drying sand for locomotive sandboxes. My duties also included being hostler to an ancient Belgian locomotive used in yard work. Young Americans are ever curious, and the hostler crew soon found it fun to drive the ancient wreck up and down the storage track, a practice soon stopped by an irate yardmaster. We worked ten-hour shifts at first and had off periods of two days instead of the usual one. Later our work was put on a eight-hour basis and the rest period reduced to one day a week. After a couple weeks on the sand detail I was put in charge of a yard supply room on the night shift and worked it until transferred to England in March, 1919.

The night shift went on duty at 11:00 and worked until 7:00. The majority of Company N men worked on day shift. I had breakfast with the company and then turned in for as much sleep as noise and confusion permitted. We soon learned to sleep in spite of outside noises. Sometimes I would awake in time to eat with the men at noon. If I did not appear on time, our cook, Ben Duff, would have a snack waiting for me and others who were on night shift. Ben was several years older than most of us and always looked after "his boys." Afternoons I spent in taking care of my clothes and equipment, going for walks about the countryside, reading if there was anything to read, or writing. I became well acquainted with other off-duty men either from Company N or from outfits near us. We often walked to Gondrecourt to shop a bit in the stores or visit the army canteen.

Our "Y" furnished evening entertainment with many visiting troupes putting on shows for us. These troupes were made up of civilians from home; after fighting ceased, soldier shows were organized and largely supplanted them. Our boxing shows became very popular, and betting often impoverished many of the fans. Our champion, George Watson, finally lost out to a fighter from a division passing through our area. I was invited to join a Masonic Club and shortly before leav-

ing the company in March was elected president of it. The Salvation Army secretary was our chaplain, and we met in his headquarters. I passed up all invitations to drink or gamble but did not press my views of such pastimes on my comrades. As a result I often served as banker for friends unable to stand temptation. My comrades respected my position on gambling, wine, and women, and I was never subjected to ridicule. The majority of our men were sober and industrious; only a comparative few were in any sense alcoholics. Gambling among soldiers is as old as the world and is tolerated as long as trouble does not ensue. A few experts soon had all the money from the larger number who could not resist. Pay day was always a signal for poker and dice games. An army regulation forbidding gambling was seldom enforced. I was a spectator at many games where hundreds of dollars changed hands. Gambling kept some men so poor that they could not afford more costly vices. The village bistros sold liquor and had many patrons among American soldiers. Occasionally our authorities had to come down hard on offenders when petty riots broke out which was not often. Bringing liquor into barracks was strictly forbidden and seldom were there violations. Later I will describe one such violation.

Shortly after our arrival in Abainville our First Lieutenant Hunter McClure became ill and died in the hospital at Neuf-Chateau. McClure was a good officer, and his passing was sincerely mourned by all who knew him.

Somewhere in France, October 8, 1918

Dear Folks: - I had a pleasant surprise yesterday when I received two letters from you, one dated August 28 and one September 20. The day before, I received one dated September 12 and Aunt Libby's letters arrived at the same time. It makes one feel good to hear from home and across the seas. I liked the pictures Wilber sent as well as his letter. You might as well return the watch to the jeweler, and I will purchase one here as soon as we are paid again. The money

for my typewriter you may keep on hand and use it to pay my Midland Life Insurance premium when it falls due in April. Keep the refund on the watch. I will not need it here since there are few opportunities for spending money for anything other than wine which exists in abundance and which I let strictly alone.

I will try to get a permit to receive a package in which you can enclose the razor blades and socks. Arrangements are being made to allow us to receive Christmas packages weighing not over three pounds.

I am sorry to learn of Mrs. Moore's death and will write to Bessie and Mr. Moore soon. I wish I had some of those good things you told me you were canning. We are getting plenty to eat, but home food is far ahead of anything else. We get potatoes, white bread of fine quality, fresh beef, jam, and beans. Yesterday we had fresh doughnuts and they were good.

I have already written to Earl Welker and will write to Wilber Foote soon. Tomorrow and next day are my rest days but I have not yet decided what to do. There is always something doing somewhere. I am still holding my job on the railroad; it is quite interesting, more so because it is line of war duty. Airplanes are as common as birds, and the only Germans I have seen are prisoners of war. The French have them working on the roads along which we traveled coming here. They are a mean-looking crowd and are dressed in almost all colors of the rainbow. Some are mere boys, and others are middle-aged men. They seem very much contented in the hands of their captors and cannot be blamed much for feeling as they do.

I can see Wilber getting about after having accustomed himself to the automobile. How long does the Sunday embargo last? What is the price of gasoline now? It must take an immense quantity to supply the needs of the army here. I see barrels of it used every day, and this place is only one of many.

Yes, I still hear occasionally from Kent, and my friends keep me posted on what is going on in school and in town. There is not very much to write about

that will pass the censor, but you will hear from me often. I am well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The St. Mihiel drive was on when we arrived; by the time of this letter it was closed. The great Meuse-Argonne offensive was getting under way and would continue until November 11. English-language and French newspapers were carrying reports of German peace feelers through neutral sources. Later events proved them true. Revolution was brewing in Germany, and her allies were dropping out of the war, exhausted and beaten. Our little railroad was working overtime hauling men and supplies.

Somewhere in France, October 13, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing again this evening to let you know I am well and in good spirits. The report was confirmed today that the Kaiser had accepted President Wilson's peace terms, so why should one not be in good spirits? The whole world is rejoicing because to all intents and purposes the war is ending. You will be greatly relieved I know. Much, however, remains to be done before final terms can be made and the boys brought home. I did not get to the front.

I am enclosing a label for a Christmas package, and it explains itself. The package should be mailed as soon as you receive this letter.

I am writing in the "Y"; a movie show is going on in an adjoining room. As the Salvation Army had a supply of candy tonight, I just finished some and it tasted good. I am getting very hungry for ice cream. As you know, I used to eat so much of it. We get grapes of good quality here, but prices are high.

We were paid Saturday in French money. It had been two months since our last pay and most of the boys were "broke." My pay after deducting insurance amounted to 275 francs.

I have already purchased a successor to my wristwatch. It is a nice pocket watch with a fifteen-jewel movement and cost in our money eleven dollars. It will be a good souvenir of France. Must close, hoping this finds you well. Love,

Gilbert.

Peace rumors continued, but fighting at the front intensified. Captured German rolling stock brought to our yards showed plainly the wear and tear of hard usage. Captured tractors were supplied with a synthetic fuel and axles showed that grease and oil of poor quality were being used. Prisoners complained of shortages of surgical equipment and medicines and reported food stocks as running low. Reports filtering through neutral countries told of near starvation among civilians in Germany. The German fleet at Kiel was reported to be in a state of mutiny. A new chancellor took over in the German government and concessions were being made to dissident Socialists and Democrats. Communism was reported making headway among rioting workmen in several places. German soldiers at the front were least affected of all and continued fighting to the bitter end.

Somewhere in France, October 19, 1918

Dear Brother: - Your letter came a few days ago and I enjoyed it and the pictures very much. I am sending you two pictures and will send others later to make sure some of them reach you. They are not as good as I would like but the best I could do. You will note that I am not wearing glasses. I have almost discarded the glasses since coming to France, only wearing them when I read or watch movies.

Today the mailman brought me two letters, one from mother and the other from Edith. They came at mess time, and meat and potatoes, etc., had to wait; the letters came first. When one is three or four thousand miles from home, he does like to hear from the home folk.

You are no doubt following the papers carefully now. I sincerely hope that the war ends before you are called. I know you wish to get in, but you will be just as well off if your turn does not come. You may be among the first called in the new list, who knows? If you are, just take heed of the advice I am handing you. I have observed a great deal and know what I am talking about.

Always remember that a good soldier thinks of himself as a second and obeys without question the orders of his superior officers, keeping his mouth shut at all times when other fellows are shooting off their opinions about things that do not concern them. A good soldier is courteous, friendly, unselfish, and lets all things alone (including wine and women) that tend to impair his abilities. Your services are loaned to your government and must be used to best advantage. If you are made a corporal or sergeant be a good one, or if you serve as a plain private as I am doing, be a good one.

You can't get anywhere in the army by jumping details to which you are assigned. All work in the army is honorable as long as you are not being followed by an armed-guard detail. Don't swallow whole hearsay news that floats about and is magnified by everyone who assists in the relaying process. I have not tried to preach you a sermon, but you may have opportunities to pass along the same path I entered last May 27, and so far I have not had anything chalked up against me.

Write again soon and give me the details of the last registration. I hope your fall work is going well by this time. I am well and still working on the railroad. Give my love to the family. As ever,

Gilbert.

New registrants were not sent overseas, the war ending too quickly for that. Wilber was willing and anxious to go and had only contempt for the "slacker" element in his community. That he would have made a good soldier I had not the

slightest doubt. Men in our family served in all of our major conflicts from the American Revolution down, and served honorably.

Backing up the Meuse-Argonne offensive made our shops and yards beehives of activity. We saw divisions passing toward the front constantly and during the fighting ambulance trains passed in the opposite direction toward base hospitals. Our narrow-gauge railway was in constant use, and repair work kept our shop men busy around the clock. We paid little attention to rumors and kept hard at it until the end came. Americans can do a lot of joking and loafing, but when the chips are down only death can stop them.

Somewhere in France, October 24, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your last letter came Tuesday along with three others, one of them from Aunt Libby. The following day a roll of home papers arrived and I am well supplied with news. Our mail service is very satisfactory when only eighteen days are required for the trip overseas. We have men here who spent twenty-seven days on a transport coming over.

From your letter it appears that the fall harvest is late. I cannot remember a time when the DeBolt potato crop remained in the ground beyond the first part of September. Help must be scarce and high priced. What are potatoes worth now on the market? Sometimes we get evaporated potatoes, but they are inferior to fresh ones. From the price you quote, milk products must now be rich people's luxuries.

I have had a couple of colds, but they soon went away. Extreme dampness here is very productive of colds. Just now the sky is lead colored, the air is chilly, and rain threatens. It does not rain hard here and most of the time is not much more than a heavy mist. We have stoves in our barracks and there is a big stove in my working place. I have a new job now, having been transferred yesterday

from yard duty to the oil and tool supply room. It is a much better job, and I have the night shift this week. Formerly I was hostler on a standard-gauge Belgian engine. And it is "some" locomotive. When the engine was working, I worked in the sand and coal supply house. That was quite a job for me, knowing nothing about locomotives. But on orders I took a stab at it. I knew it could not blow up since it was equipped with a safety valve. I ran the thing around the yards to the coal pile and the water tank and had a good time with it. A fellow does a lot of things in the army that otherwise would have been deemed impossible.

I cannot give from memory the reference to Napoleon's history that you requested, but you can find it in my copy of Napoleon's Military Career. You will find the copy in my large bookcase. Read over the campaign of 1810-11 and you will probably find an account of the policy that led up to the Russian attack and invasion.

I recently received an invitation to join a Masonic Club. Last night a group of us were initiated (much to the enjoyment of spectators). It is composed of all ranks from private to officers and will do much toward making life here more like home. I shall never regret joining the Masonic Lodge.

I had a letter recently from Mary White, a classmate in Kent State, giving me news of the school. Prof. Layton is married now, and Prof. Olson has entered government service. Mary is now teaching in Texas, going there shortly after writing the letter. She enclosed a red rose pressed from full bloom, and it had retained its scent perfectly and reminded me that I had once lived in Ohio. And I intend living again in Ohio when we get through with "Fritz."

I will send you a German souvenir soon. I am enclosing more of my photos and perhaps some of the folk would like to have them to keep the rats away. Must close now. Give my love to all and do not work too hard.

Gilbert.

P.S. I just read in the local paper you sent about Ivan Blacklege and his regiment's location. I am not far distant from that place.

As before noted, joy riding on the Belgian locomotive soon ended. The yardmaster lacked a sense of humor and ruled that only regularly assigned crew members were authorized to move the thing. It was fun while it lasted. A date on the locomotive told us that it was built in 1880 for the Belgian National Railroad. The Germans captured the locomotive when they invaded Belgium and used it in their campaigns in France. Americans captured the ancient vehicle during the St. Mihiel drive and sent it down to the Abainville yards. A few repairs were made, and the engine was put into service shifting standard-gauge cars from place to place in the yards. We found later that the safety valve would sometimes stick and required a hammer blow to cause it to work. We named the "monster" "Bill," and this also drew the yardmaster's wrath. It so happened, just happened, that "Bill" was the yardmaster's first name.

My supply department consisted of two rooms or rather two separate buildings. In one room we kept gasoline, grease, oil, and kerosene. In the other we kept tools required on narrow-gauge locomotives, both gasoline propelled and steam. I kept records of all tools issued to crews and checked on their return. I also doled out gasoline, grease and oil, keeping records of same. Ever since, I have wondered who looked at the records or cared how much material was used. War at best is wasteful. Crewmen often waited in the tool room while their locomotives were being readied for use. A big stove heated the place and a comfortable atmosphere prevailed. Weighty problems of war and peace were often discussed and settled around the stove. It all reminded me of a country grocery store back home.

Somewhere in France, October 29, 1918

Dear Folks: - I will try to write a few lines during a dull period in work hours. I was busy this morning handing out oil and getting in extra stock. The weather for several days has been fine, just like our Indian summer at home. Yesterday I was off duty and went for a walk in the country around the camp. We have had a few frosts, and leaves are turning, making the trees take on the autumnal colors that herald the approach of winter. Farmers are still plowing, and all are at work with no slackers in evidence.

I was wondering this morning while pushing a handcar of oil how it would seem to be at home again and eat a real old-fashioned meal. One does get hungry at times for all sorts of things. We have plenty to eat, but I would like to stack up against a whole shelf of pies, cakes, etc.

Last Sunday I met an old friend in our "Y." He is located in a camp close by. I first met him in summer school in 1915 and associated with him in the two summers following. His home is in Bellaire, Ohio, and he is having hard luck, having received no mail since July 28. Transfers probably account for his mail difficulties. I know now where the Ohio National Guard division is located, but there is no possibility of getting over there. Have you heard anything recently concerning Fredericktown boys in that division, Hobart Cassel, Dayton Schrantz, and Wilford James?

I just came in from looking over a captured German locomotive; we have several of them here. They show hard usage and were really built to stand hard knocks.

Must close for this time. I am looking forward to my next bunch of papers and letters; they usually come in bunches. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our stock of captured equipment gradually grew and some of it was repaired and returned to use by our crews. We often found papers and documents on the captured rolling stock and the next letter in this series was written on German paper. The Germans used a synthetic fuel in their tractors, a vile and evil-smelling distillate from alcohol made from potatoes. The stuff would burn and give off an odor that could be smelled a mile away. We also found packs of German cigarettes. One of the boys experimented with the "weed" and reported that it tasted and smelled like burning straw. He did not repeat the experiment. German tracks were the same gauge as ours; and when they failed to tear up their railways, our men hooked on to them and saved themselves the job of rebuilding.

Somewhere in France, November 4, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your last letter came Friday and in record time. Aunt Libby's letter dated earlier came at the same time. I am kept well supplied with news. You get the war news as soon as we do. Our papers are printed in Paris and are usually late arriving. Often we see men coming through from the front and they give us the latest details.

Recently an engineer came in who had just returned from taking an engine up front. His engine was one of a group that suddenly decided to quit the rails. While putting them back on the rails, the Germans got their range and sent over a few shells. Aim was bad and only one engine was touched; it was brought here for repairs. Several engines and trains went to the front last night, and we had to work overtime getting them ready. I tried to get permission to go as a crew member, but the yard foreman would have none of it.

This letter paper came from a quantity left behind by the Germans in one of their so-called "strategic retreats." One of the men who had been up front brought it in to us. The "Fritzies" are not spending much time these days moving

their belongings toward home.

Thursday evening our Masonic Club met and initiated a group of candidates. Later we had pie, doughnuts, coffee, and cigars. For entertainment we had music and a sleight-of-hand performance. I am happy to know that Wilber is making use of some of my clothes. I will need a whole new outfit when I return. I have gained 22 pounds since leaving Humphreys, and the climate seems to agree with me. I get plenty of exercise wrestling with oil barrels and gasoline drums, etc.

Our home district made a good showing in the Liberty Loan drive, and the U.S. as a whole did better than ever before. If you could see all I have witnessed, you could better understand why loans are so necessary. Hope to hear from you soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our nightly sessions around the oil-house stove recounted all the rumors of peace that were floating round. An authentic report came out that Chancellor Max of Germany had approached President Wilson through the Swiss Ambassador asking for terms and signifying that he was willing to use the famous "Fourteen Points" as a basis. Allied leadership ordered General Foch to admit a German delegation through the lines to receive terms of an armistice which would permit peace negotiations to begin. The delegation came through on the night of November 7 and we heard about it soon after. In distance the point of entrance to our lines was not far away from us, but between there were hundreds of thousands of soldiers.

Somewhere in France, November 8, 1918

Dear Folks: - I do not know how often you receive mail from me, and you may get two or three letters at a time. I try to write twice a week and do not often miss. Two rolls of papers came Sunday and kept me busy reading a couple of

afternoons. I work nights and have my spare time afternoons. After I finished reading the papers, I passed them on to the other men from Knox County, who were happy to have them.

The Cleveland News looked very familiar; it was the first I had seen since leaving the country. It makes as much noise as ever with its headlines. I will appreciate more copies of the News.

Of course you were not sorry to hear of the surrender of the Central Powers. The Italian Army surely put a damper on Austrian hopes. Germany, left without a friend, is now in a perilous position. We heard today that Germany's surrender is imminent. At any rate you will not have to send another son to this war now. That pleases me more than the prospect of getting home.

I am very busy at times and have it easy at others. The work on the whole is not hard and I think our company fortunate in being sent here. Thanksgiving night we will have a minstrel show put on by soldiers in the "Y." I wish you could see a soldier entertainment. Several American theatrical troupes are touring France and have been here.

When I received Earl's address from Wilber I wrote to him and had a reply only a few days ago. I was happy to hear from him, but there is little or no chance of seeing him. When we get home, we will have some great times comparing experiences in the A.E.F. Hope you are all well. I have never felt better.

Love to all,

Gilbert.

Censorship forbade such details as had come to us from being written in letters. Orders came through to go on fighting as though nothing had happened. Germany was not to be trusted even though their emissaries had come through the lines asking for an armistice. The highway running through Abainville carried a

steady flow of vehicles in both directions. We saw many French and American divisions moving to and from the front and our narrow-gauge railroad was worked to the limit. Track was hastily laid and derailments common. A locomotive and four cars composed a train. Wires were strung along the tracks for signalling purposes and squads of men kept at strategic points to effect quick repairs to damaged equipment.

German airplanes came over at night frequently and on one raid blew up an ammunition dump a few miles from us. A Zeppelin passed over us one night in October but dropped no bombs. We had no lights showing at night for reasons of safety.

Somewhere in France, November 12, 1918

Dear Folks: - A few lines now to tell you I am well and have received your letter of October 13. Mail is coming regularly now and I do not think any of it has been lost.

Everyone here is happy now. The breakdown of Germany makes peace certain and the morning papers report that the Kaiser has abdicated. You should see the French soldiers and civilians. They are simply crazy in their delight. You cannot blame them; four years of war and living under a constant and menacing threat is enough to make them happy at deliverance. I would like to have seen the celebration in the States. I hope peace is made before long. I can't get home any too soon to suit me.

We have had rain, and the mud is very sticky. It is easy to take a spill, even on level ground. I was recently strolling across the railroad yard in the dark going to work, when, wow, I was suddenly at the bottom of a three-foot ditch. The bottom was too soft to cause injury. The best one can do is to say a few things, crawl out, say more unpleasant things, and move on. Now that the war is over, we hope lights are permissible.

I am still in the oil house at night. The work is congenial, and I am enjoying life in France more than in army camps at home. If I can keep the weight I have now, you may recognize me with difficulty, who knows?

Perhaps censorship will ease up, and I can tell you where I am. I think I can say that Company N is in the First Army you have been reading about. I am enclosing a souvenir and will send others later. It is almost time to report for work so will close. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Shortly after we went on duty at 11:00 p.m. on the night of November 10, an unofficial message came over our train dispatcher's wire that an armistice had been agreed upon and fighting would stop at 11:00 a.m. next day, November 11. Word spread quickly through the yards and shops, but men stayed on the job and there were no demonstrations. Next morning official announcement was made and orders issued for work as usual. After breakfast I passed up my usual morning of sleep and asked for a pass into the nearby town of Gondrecourt. Four of us started down the highway and were greeted on every hand by jubilant French women, men, and children. French soldiers were celebrating in Gondrecourt as well as civilians, and I shall never forget the constantly shouted phrase, "Finiela guerre," (the war is over). All over the area bistros were crowded that night, but there were no wild or uncontrolled celebrations by either Americans or French. We suddenly felt a great weight lifted from us and what did we say then? "WHEN DO WE GO HOME?" and this question dominated conversation until we did go home.

Somewhere in France, November 16, 1918

Dear Folks: - This is Saturday, one of the many and fast-flying days between us and home. Time moves much more rapidly than I thought it would. I have not

received your weekly letter yet, due probably to a mixup along the line. I am sure news from over here roused the spirits of home folk more than anything that could have happened.

I am well as usual and have not felt better for a long time. My life in the army has been a great benefit to me, I know. The weather has been damp for several days and colder than usual. We have been issued plenty of winter clothing, and I am comfortable. I did not get back the sweater Aunt Libby knit for me, but I did draw one that is well made and warm. We are well fed and have comfortable quarters so I have no complaints to register. Nevertheless we have a few chronic knockers, there are those everywhere, who expect Hotel Deshler luxuries, etc. It is sometimes amusing and sometimes disgusting to hear these fellows sound off.

The thing we are most interested in now is: "When do we go home?" Whenever a group gets together, the subject comes up within ten minutes. Some will be lucky enough to be first; and, of course, someone will be last. It looks to me as though the boys who came over first should go home first. At any rate the army will get us home as soon as possible.

What did you think of the way in which the Kaiser wound up his affairs? The Ohio boys in the Rainbow Division took their share of honors and Harry Randall's regiment, the old Ohio N.G. 42nd, was right on the job at the capture of Sedan. I will send you a copy of Stars and Stripes and you can read it for yourselves.

I have studied a lot of history and have never heard of an armistice whose terms were more exacting than the one accepted by Germany. It is the best safeguard possible for the future.

You asked me in one letter where I landed in France. We landed at Brest, and you can find it on any good map of Europe. We do not know where we will go

to embark for home. I can get aboard as quickly as anyone wherever we go. I am willing to put up with most anything to get back under Dad's roof again.

Must close and get moving again. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Without meaning to be such, I became the oil-house authority on French and European history. The shack housed "authorities" of all kinds, and many were the practical but harmless jokes perpetrated by masters in that field. Americans are experts in scrounging, and various and sundry tidbits of food found their way to our midnight table.

Somewhere in France, November 20, 1918

Dear Grandmother: - It is quite cold this afternoon, and the weather is much like that of Thanksgiving time in Ohio. We have had no snow yet, and we are told that snow is not plentiful during winters here. I am sitting at a writing table in the "Y" close by a warm coal fire, which is another pleasant reminder of home. Fuel is so scarce in France that people do with very little heat. The mining regions were in German hands during the fighting, and wood is not as plentiful as at home. Uncle Sam provides coal for the "Y" from his stock, and it is worth sixty dollars per ton.

The French are a patient lot to endure for four years all they have gone through. Everywhere one sees women and children doing men's work, able-bodied men being in the army. We see people cultivating land that at home would be left idle, and they do know how to raise vegetables. They do not live on their farms as we do at home, but live in little villages, going out to their fields each day in their oldfashioned two-wheel carts.

When a farmer here wishes to hitch two or three horses to a wagon, he does it by placing one ahead of the other rather than abreast as we do. Usually

people, horses, cows, and chickens are housed under the same roof. Fields are very small and usually unfenced. The country hereabouts is rolling and of the hill-and-valley type. The soil is a sticky clay and underlaid with a sort of chalk subsoil. During muddy weather walking is difficult.

Each village has its church, town hall or Mairie, a few shops, and its old-fashioned houses, many dating back to the time of Columbus. This part of France is known as Lorraine, and a part of it was taken by the Germans in 1871 and recently retaken largely through the efforts of American soldiers. I would like to visit the many historic places in which France abounds and perhaps I can. One must have been here four months to qualify for a fourteen-day furlough. And we might be leaving here before the four months pass; who knows?

I hope your Thanksgiving will be a pleasant one and this year we all have much for which we are truly thankful, or should be. Love to all,

Gilbert.

An order came out setting November 24 as a general letter-writing day and we were told to write "Dad" a Christmas letter. Censorship was relaxed, and we were permitted to say where we were and give other details formerly forbidden. The following letter is self explanatory.

Dad's Christmas Letter Abainville, France, November 24, 1918

Dear Dad: - Doubtless you have heard through the papers of the scheme making November 24 a great letter-writing day for soldiers of the A.E.F. Letters to the fathers. It is a fine plan, and for the first time the censorship is lifted and we are permitted to give details heretofore under the ban.

I have had no mail this week but am expecting some tomorrow. No papers have come for several weeks. I am well and feeling fine. The weather this week has been ideal, the nights clear and frosty and the days sunshiny and pleasant.

It resembles Ohio weather at Thanksgiving time. Speaking about Thanksgiving sends my thoughts homeward again. I never missed being at home for that day and I sincerely hope that this will be the last I spend away. This should be a great Thanksgiving for the American people, commemorating as it does the end of the war and deliverance from hardships and long hours of waiting. For my part I am thankful that I am alive and soon to return to my home and place in civil life.

As far as coming home is concerned, we know nothing. Our company has been lucky so far, and we are hoping our good luck continues. The great topic of discussion now is that of going home. If we learn nothing else than a sense of appreciation of home and country, much good will have been accomplished. It seems to me now that the slackers and draft dodgers would begin to see wherein they were cowardly and weak. I cannot conceive of C--- C---- being able to look a returned soldier in the face.

Now for a few details that I know will interest you. We sailed from New York, or properly speaking, from Hoboken on August 31 on the transport Great Northern. There were three ships in the convoy, Northern Pacific and Leviathan being the other two. The last named was formerly a German liner (Vaterland) and is the largest ship afloat. The only incident worth mentioning was the destruction of a submarine by a depth bomb near our ship. A depth bomb makes a big stir when it goes off.

We landed at Brest, France, on September 8 and were stationed in a "rest" camp for ten days. While there, we stayed in Napoleon's old barracks. From Brest we traveled in a zigzag way across France, missing Paris by a few miles, until we arrived at our present camp near the village of Abainville, which is in French Lorraine. We are some forty or fifty miles from Metz and closer than that to the front. The American army held the Lorraine front and extended over a line of fifty-two miles. The Rainbow Division has been placed in the army of

occupation.

Our camp is headquarters for the narrow-gauge railway system that runs all along the front. There are several shops here, foundries, machine, etc. Here all the dinky engines, steam and gasoline, are put into service. Cars are built here by the hundreds for service. Rolling stock in need of repairs is brought here to the shops. I have worked with the roundhouse force ever since coming here.

For a few weeks I had charge of the sandhouse and was hostler for a standard-gauge engine used in the yards. I learned to run both standard-gauge and narrow-gauge locomotives, steam or gasoline propelled. My next job was a promotion to clerk in the oil supply room where I am now working. We have eight-hour shifts now, mine being from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. I have charge of oil, tools, coal, and sand, handling the oil and tools myself. There is much accounting work to be done; every pound of coal and every pint of oil, and all tools must be accounted for at any hour of day. The coal men keep checks on all amounts issued and turn the slips over to me for recording. All requisitions for coal and oil not for engines have first to be signed by the supply officer. Coal here is worth sixty dollars per ton and is constantly kept under guard. So well guarded is it that a green guard not recognizing me one night, arrested me when I went out for coal for our stove. I had to produce proof before he would let me go. (A good joke on me!)

We have good times around my shack. The yardmen when waiting for engines come in to sit by the stove, and one cannot get lonesome. Sometimes we buy French bread and steak, broiling the latter over the coals. We make coffee in a clean tallow pot and have a general good time. The army is not all hardship by any means, and I have never felt better in my life, nor weighed more. I have each Monday off duty.

I am trying to get a pass to go to Verdun, which is about seventy-five miles away. Domremy, birthplace of Joan of Arc, is ten miles away. We may not be in France long enough to get our fourteen-day furlough, four months of service being required to qualify.

I received a letter from Wilber Foote and he is about 100 miles from here, closer to the front or where the front used to be. Earl and Thornburg are much farther away than is Wilber. I do not expect to see them this side of the Atlantic unless it be by accident.

Wilber Foote is no longer a first sergeant, having been transferred, and now is a platoon sergeant. Wilber did well in promotion. Over here a private draws $33 per month, a first-class private $36, a corporal $39, and sergeants range from $42 to $56. Had I continued in the non-com school I would probably rank higher than private. I am quite content and hope to leave the army as I entered, Private Roberts, and with no black marks against my record.

We have three Knox County men in our company, Cervenka, Harris, and Householder, other than myself. We have one Kent man, Joe Hanichak, and in all we have several from Ohio. We meet men from all over the United States and a few foreign countries. An Australian is working in the yards who spent three years at the front and was wounded six times. We have an Italian in Company N who formerly lived in Argentina.

I suppose I can pick up a job when I get home, but I would like first to put in some time on the farm. So, have the fatted calf ready and a few fatted roosters, etc., etc. I have not tasted chicken since the day they turned me loose from Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. We get plenty to eat but with little variety. We get good beef, but beef once and sometimes twice a day gets tiresome. We get bacon each morning and that also gets to be an old story. I won't be able to look an honest cow or pig in the face without a guilty feeling

for a long time. Our company feeds well, among the best in camp. We have good bread, all wheat and superior to that we had in the States. But even so, things can become a bit monotonous.

So many parcels have been lost that I will refrain from sending one home. I will carry small stuff I have collected with me. I have a couple of German barrage shells that I am having made into nice souvenir articles.

I have written quite at length this time so will sign off. The things I have told you are only a few of the many I will keep until I return. And then around the "homefires" and with the day drawing to a close we can talk on and on. I did not get to the firing line, but at least I kept my rifle shined up all the time ready, if called, to go. Hope this finds you well and I wish the home folk a very Merry Christmas. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The Christmas letter reached its destination promptly. During the fall months the great influenza epidemic killed thousands of people in the United States and elsewhere. In my own community several friends and neighbors died, and my father was gravely ill for weeks. Strict discipline kept the epidemic under control in the army, and with the coming of winter it abated at home and abroad. Influenza killed more people than the war itself.

Abainville, France, November 26, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am writing my weekly letter today as usual, the one dated November 24 being a special number. This is my day off and I am putting in the time sleeping, washing clothes, taking a bath, and talking (most of the time) with other night-shift men. I am well, and in fact could not feel better. I had to draw a new coat yesterday as I had gotten too large for the old one. It was too large for me when I drew it at Humphreys.

I am happy to know you escaped the influenza epidemic. According to reports it must have been bad in the States. I received a Kent paper last night which gave statistics on cases and deaths in Ohio alone. I also received a letter from President McGilvrey of Kent State, who has not forgotten his former students.

I do not know how long we are to stay in this place. Work is almost finished, and we are scheduled to begin drilling soon to put in the time. Drill will be play in comparison with what we had in Humphreys when the sun was hot enough to boil eggs. Some reports have us going soon, but they are unreliable and I take no stock in them. We will get home sometime and the sooner the better.

The French will take over the place here, and what a place it is! When one considers the time required to put it into operation with shops, yards, etc., where only a few months ago crops were growing, the imagination is staggered.

I am enclosing views of Abainville and Gondrecourt, two villages twenty minutes' walk apart. Gondrecourt is about as large as Fredericktown and Abainville is much smaller. We were not permitted to send such pictures earlier since they might betray to possible enemies the position and identity of troop units.

Do my letters come to you regularly? Since the middle of October letters have been coming regularly here, but papers do not. A short time ago I received from a friend in Kent a rather unique sort of letter. It was a pamphlet made up of cartoons, jokes, and editorials from many leading papers. The pamphlet was entitled "Frown Chaser" and the name was well chosen. Included were two cartoons, "Bringing up Father" and "The Terrible Tempered Mr. Bang." I am faring very well in France and get all news possible from you and my friends. Things here run smoothly and we have lost only one man, Lt. Hunter McClure, who died only a few days after we arrived in Abainville.

This may reach you before Christmas so I will again wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The death of Hunter McClure was a blow that suddenly awakened us to some of the realities of war. McClure was well liked and respected by men and officers alike. During the winter we lost another man, Pvt. Chellemi, whose death resulted from an accident. There were minor illnesses, of course, but insofar as I know only two or three men spent time in hospitals while in Abainville. I left the company in March, 1919, and heard in recent years that two men became ill on the move to Brest and were sent to hospitals. I do know that both returned to the United States at a later time than Company N. For several weeks we had as neighbors in Abainville, Companies G and O of the 21st Engineers.

Abainville, France, November 29, 1918

Dear Folks: - Your last two letters came today and I am sorry to hear that Dad is ill with influenza. It is difficult to say how long the epidemic will continue. Our company has escaped with very few cases so far. Several of us have had colds but soon recovered. I have not been on sick report since leaving Brest. I was on report three days in Brest. I hope you have no more cases in the family and elsewhere. The disease is highly communicable and precautions do much to arrest its spreading.

Fredericktown did well in celebrating Armistice Day with a parade lasting an hour. I am glad I saw the simple peasant people of France holding their celebration in our "Y." The national hymn of France, the "Marseillaise" is as sacred to the French as Scripture and we were inspired listening to it rendered, not by a sympathetic audience of Americans, but by war mothers, widows, and orphans.

Although I am anxious to get home I would never have been satisfied had I not come over with the rest of the boys. The fellows who slacked out by one means or another missed the greatest opportunities ever presented to men who are called to defend home and country. These men will never have the vision of a better America and a better world so clearly defined to those who were with the colors. Men who slacked in '61 have worthy successors in the few who dodged this time.

I did not like the picture, but it was the best I could get. I will send more papers and pictures later. We are faring very well as far as food is concerned, and in every other way as I look at the situation. Army life has its drawbacks and inconveniences, but on the whole we are well off. I know you wonder what I am eating. For supper tonight we had brown beans, tomatoes, cooked onions, bread and coffee. Since I have been working nights, I do not eat dinner with the company, but did make an exception Thanksgiving Day. We did not have turkey but did very well with roast beef, cabbage, potatoes, cake, bread, jam, coffee, and cigars. There was a football game in the afternoon, but to get necessary sleep I did not attend.

In the evening our Masonic Club met, initiated a candidate, and had a feed consisting of all the cake we could eat, all the coffee we could drink, and cigars. Our Salvation Army woman, a motherly person of middle age, baked the cake and it reminded us so much of home. The Salvation Army is a great organization and doing work other churches should do. Whenever I pass a Salvation Army meeting in the future, I will contribute to their work.

We have a battalion of colored soldiers in camp and last week they put on a minstrel show that was very good. A couple of white sergeants with them served with me at Humphreys in Company K of the 4th Regiment. Tell Dad I will look into the matter of purchasing my equipment when I come home. I am now in touch with Wilber Foote and Earl Welker through correspondence. Must close.

Love to all,

Gilbert.

Abainville, France, December 2, 1918

Dear Folks: - This is Sunday evening and letter writing is again in order. My day is just beginning and I go to work at 11:00 p.m. Working at night is great stuff and I like it. I get off work at 7:00 a.m. I am well and feeling fine and hope the influenza epidemic at home is over by this time with all hands back at work.

There is not much doing here now worth writing about. We have our daily routine of trains going out and coming in. Several companies have left, and others have come in; but we are still on the job. I hope when we do move it will be toward home.

We have men in camp who have been seventeen months in France, having come over with Pershing early in the war. They are tired of the place and wish to go home. I can't blame them at all; they were with the British at Cambrai last spring and have seen much rough service. They salvaged the field of Château-Thierry and have been at Verdun and can really tell us about war. Some of these men are on the roundhouse force; a few work at night, and I have come to know them well.

Troops are passing through here daily and many have seen hard service. By the time you get this letter, President Wilson will be in Paris for the Peace Conference. We wish he would visit our section, but this is well-nigh impossible. I would like to be in Paris while the conference is in session. It will be a worldwide affair, the greatest of its kind in history. The Germans will get all that is coming to them and more. I suppose you have read about the surrender of the fleet.

You should see the mud here now. A three days' rain made the place a sight.

Without rubber boots one is lost. We are told that there is much rain here during the winter and sometimes mixed with snow. I think I can live through it. We look at it cheerfully and say: "Just wait"; and just waiting it is.

I have a day off tomorrow and may go up toward the old front. I am hoping to visit Metz sometime soon. I am out of news so will close. Hope to hear from you soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The projected visit to the old front was cancelled. We had to depend on trucks, and the drivers did not care to battle the mud unnecessarily. The few trips I did make were disappointing in several ways. Mud, devastation, ruined villages and homes, are not such as to delight tourists' eyes or sensibilities. I never did get to Metz or Verdun. I saw all I needed to see to convince me of the need for a peace organization to render war impossible. Nations have never been able to settle their differences in an equitable and peaceful manner; and will they ever learn?

Abainville, France, December 6, 1918

Dear Folks: - To tell you the truth, there isn't much to write about except to say I am well. This place is as dead as I imagine Georgetown is on the day of the picnic. End of the was had made great differences here. We are still on the job in the shops and the roundhouse. Some other companies are leaving with others coming in, perhaps for only a few days. Our turn will come, soon we hope. As long as we are to be in France I would rather remain here with winter coming on.

We have shows at the "Y" almost every night. Last night the 88th Division band was here and gave us a fine concert. The 88th was at the front, and now is on its way to the coast. Movies are scheduled for tonight, and the place

will be packed.

Aunt Libby's weekly news letter came yesterday giving me news from Fredericktown and vicinity. Only a few papers have showed up so far and will probably all come in a bunch.

We received another issue of winter clothing yesterday in the form of a leather vest with wool lining. It is very warm and comfortable and in some cases better than an overcoat. We will soon have so much stuff that mules will have to be issued to carry it. Do you remember the shoes I had at Sherman that you thought so large? They are still doing service and are in good shape yet. I have concluded at last that they are the best for me.

How are Fredericktown schools getting along without Frank Thornburg? No doubt he will be back on the job next fall. Welkers had to wait a long time for Earl's letters; I cannot understand the delays.

I will have plenty of razor blades when my Christmas box comes. Yesterday we received an issue of new auto-strop razors, blades, etc., in a case with a mirror inside. I have been wearing the socks you sent and the "manufacturer" did a good job making them. I do not anticipate freezing this winter. I do not like to think about another trip in French boxcars but will be happy to ride in anything that will take us toward home. Hope you are all well by this time. Love to all,

Gilbert.

A.P.O. 703, France, December 10, 1918

Dear Folks: - I am enjoying a day off and listening to rain pounding on the roof of the barracks. I had planned to take a long walk along a road I had not explored, but not today, too much rain. Books and papers are about as plentiful here now as June roses in December. Many war-time conditions still prevail and must be endured.

I received another letter from Wilber Foote Saturday informing me where he is located. His regiment is drilling as are all infantry troops. A few of the Engineers here are drilling, but to date we have had none of it.

We have been having musical entertainments lately by regimental bands stationed nearby and brought in by our "Y" people. When my papers show up, I will spend some time catching up with news from the U.S. They are wandering around somewhere along the lines of communication.

Walter Woodward wrote me a very nice letter saying he had been working for Paul and would finish December 1. Paul will feel lost without Howard next spring. I have not heard from Earl lately but expect a letter anytime. Neither he nor Wilber saw action at the front.

It hardly seems possible that two weeks from tomorrow is Christmas Day. A big time is being planned at the "Y." Much has happened since last Christmas. I was in school then but am now in the army. I have never missed a Christmas at home and sincerely hope not to miss another. Last year I came home from school a week early on account of a smallpox scare. Things at Kent State are rather dead now, and enrollment is down.

Schools are to be opened for soldiers and every camp will have at least one. The movement is a good one and may result in much good. Keep on sending papers and some day they will arrive. Hope you are all well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The papers all arrived eventually. Each roll of papers was numbered and I kept a record by checking numbers as the rolls came to me. The last to come to Abainville was forwarded to England. Knowing when I would leave England, I told the home folk when to cease their efforts. My papers had a wide circulation in the company. We had one man in Company N who was almost illiterate,

and I often wrote letters for him. I also served as banker for several boys who could not trust themselves with money when they were paid.

A.P.O. 703, France, December 15, 1918

Dear Folks: - Since writing my last letter I received more mail than I had for a long time. Five of the newspaper rolls came numbered 5, 6, 7, 8. The next day I received a roll of magazines from Aunt Nellie. Aunt Libby's weekly letter and one from Clara came with the papers so now I am deep in news from the old Buckeye state.

A favorite theme for argument, humorous of course, among the boys concerns which is the best state. Over in the oil house last night a man from Alabama had an argument with a lad from Florida on which state had the greater number of alligators. A couple of Negroes disputed over which one of them was the darker of the two. No decision was reached in either case.

Companies are leaving and others coming in almost daily. I am still putting in my eight hours a day in the oil house and am happy to be working under a roof. Rain falls almost every day and the weather is damp and disagreeable.

We have had three band concerts and three picture shows this week in the way of entertainment. There is to be a big time Christmas Day, and a fund is being raised to provide a real Christmas for the poor children of the village of Abainville. Tonight, as every Sunday night, in the "Y" we will have a song service and a sermon.

Orders have been issued to establish schools in all army camps for the benefit of troops waiting for transportation home. The "Y" has charge of these schools and elementary and high-school subjects will be taught. The secretary informed me that I am to be an instructor and teach European history. It will seem like old times to get into the game again. Time hangs heavy on our hands, and school will be a welcome diversion.

Another plan is afloat that appeals to me although as yet no orders have been issued. If ordered, soldiers who are college graduates can get furloughs after peace is declared and attend a French or British university for three months on full pay and with ration allowances as well as tuition. This would be the opportunity of a lifetime and I am tempted to take advantage of it if we are still here when the time comes. I would like to go to the University of Paris and study language, history, and literature. There would also be travel opportunities, and the course could be prolonged at student expense.

Of course I would like to get home as much as anyone else; but if the opportunity presents itself through a headquarters order, I feel I must make an effort to take advantage; such as this probably will never come again. I shall give the matter much thought and consideration. I would like your opinion on the subject. I would have to draw on the home "bank" for money, but it would be worth hundreds of dollars to me when I return to my chosen work.

I am glad to know you finished the corn harvest early, and I remember how late it was last year. I hope this finds you all well. I am feeling fine and now weigh 185 pounds, a lifetime high for me. I am still drawing larger sizes in clothes. Must close now. Love to all,

Gilbert.

My hopes and dreams came true in early March, 1919, when I was ordered to England and became a student in London University. I have never regretted my decision to apply and accept. Later comments will cover the university experience.

During the fall months Captain Cannon left us and was succeeded in command of Company N by Lt. William Bruckman, gentleman and soldier, and well liked and respected. In January I was called to the orderly room one day and asked to

write a history of Company N to be included in a regimental biography to be published after the war. I accepted the assignment and brought it up to the point where we were when I left for England. My sketch was published in the Biography but no one had been assigned to complete the story from March to June. Three years ago with the collaboration of Walter Seiler and others I finished the job, revising the whole to include reminiscences contributed by survivors of the company. A copy of the history will be included in this narrative.

A.P.O. 703, Abainville, France, December 21, 1918

Dear Dad: - Your letter and Wilber's came the same day although written several days apart. The pictures are very good and made me feel right at home. One of the fellows glancing over my shoulder when I was looking at them, asked if one of them was a picture of my wife and children; and he really meant it too, not knowing whether I was married or single. Mother should take that as a real compliment. All of you look well and the dog looks as though she had not a single care in the world. Grace writes that she intends sending pictures soon.

I am happy to know you are recovering so well from the "flu." The greatest danger from "flu" lies in a followup by pneumonia. We must have been thinking along the same lines about seeing Europe. I appreciate your offer ever so much and will take advantage if at all possible. If anything turns up concerning the plan I recently wrote about, I will let you know. In regards to sending money I will make inquiry and acquaint you with my findings.

I just finished writing to Anna Foote. She secured my address from Aunt Libby and wrote me an interesting letter. She is with the Lakeside Hospital Unit which is attached to the British army at Rouen. I am sending you a map of France that gives all the towns, big and little, and you will be able to find Abainville.

I have recently heard from Earl, but there is little chance of seeing him. Good standing and four months' service are necessary for furloughs or "leaves" we call them. A "leave" lasts fourteen days and the holder cannot roam about at will. He goes where he is sent to one of several places under government control. My best hope of seeing much here lies in being allowed to attend a university.

Things are running smoothly here. Life has settled down to a routine that seldom changes and there isn't much happening. Hope this finds you well. I am in the best of health and working (not too hard). Love to all,

Gilbert.

I did not report in my letters the occasional disturbances in the village wine shops when pitched battles were staged by intoxicated soldiers, French and American, and sometimes among Americans themselves. The village marshal would call in our M.P.'s, and a few drunks would wind up in the guardhouse. These disturbances never reached major proportions. The village mayor would send round the town crier announcing new regulations, when translated, saying that it is forbidden to sell cognac to American soldiers. Cognac was a very potent liquor. Soon all would be forgotten and forgiven. And then, a repeat. Such was life in a small French town. The American "soldat" had money.

Abainville, France, December 26, 1918

Dear Folks: - Christmas is over and I sincerely hope it is the last for me on foreign soil. Snow fell at times during the day giving us a little touch of color contrast. Snow does not last long here, and this is the first of any importance. I could not help but think of last Christmas, but I did not permit myself to get homesick although many of our men were.

We had a good dinner of French steak, mashed potatoes, cake, bread, and

coffee. After dinner we were given the "Y" contribution of two chocolate bars each. The U. S. Government gave each of us a box of candy, and the company fund came up with plenty of "smokes." After all, Christmas wasn't so bad, but I do not care for a repetition. A few of the boys celebrated by getting drunk, but that sort of thing does not appeal to me at all.

Yesterday afternoon the "Y" had a tree for the French orphans of the village and in the evening our colored soldiers put on a minstrel show. A lecture is scheduled for tonight, but I will not attend. Our Masonic Club meets tonight, and I will be there.

I received another roll of papers from Aunt Libby today and a roll of Youth's Companions from Uncle Henry. I have plenty of reading material now and can make good use of it. My Christmas box failed to arrive for Christmas Day as did a majority of boxes for the company.

I suppose the boys now in Camp Sherman were permitted to go home for Christmas. Papers here say that camps at home are being emptied at the rate of 30,000 men a day. Troops are being sent from France too and only yesterday I read that 43,000 Engineers were due for immediate demobilization. We have some of the 14th and 15th Engineers here; they were among Pershing's first 28,000 to come over and have seen long and hard service. They were with the British army when the big drive last March took place, and later they salvaged the Château-Thierry battle fields.

If we leave here before the signing of a peace treaty, my school project in Paris will collapse. I have not heard anything about it lately although I still have hopes. There is plenty of time yet for many things to happen.

I now weigh 196 pounds and have never felt better. I may lose when we start traveling again but hope to hold on to the most of it. Today I drew another blanket and so have no fears of getting cold in bed. Hope the box

will arrive soon. Love to all,

Gilbert.

A.E.O. 703, France, December 31, 1918

Dear Folks: - My Christmas package arrived December 27 along with a letter from home, one from Aunt Libby, and a Kent Tribune. The box came through in good shape, everything being intact. The chocolate bars soon disappeared and were first of their kind I had seen on this side of the "pond." I am wearing a pair of the socks and they are very satisfactory. They are not as heavy as government issue and are better for indoor work. I also received a Christmas card from Edith and Bertha Rogers.

This is the last day of the old year, and what a year it has been! I do not expect to strike another of its kind soon, if ever. I have seen many things and experienced more than I ever thought possible. Yes, much has happened since last May 27.

We were paid today after dinner and I received 144 francs, the equivalent of $26.50 in our money; $6.50 was deducted for my insurance. I now have a little more than $60 saved up counting this month's pay. I will have something to start with if my university plan goes through; if not, I will use it getting started at home.

Another company is leaving today on its way to the coast and home. We do not know who will be next. Business is rather dull now, and the boys will celebrate New Year's in fine shape. The fruit of the vine will flow freely and in abundance tonight.

You mentioned butchering a few hogs. I will be ready for slices of real ham and dozens of eggs. Hogs sent over here are all bacon and come in little tin boxes. I do not know what happens to the hams. Do not give me boiled or roast beef, nor rice. We are getting plenty but do get tired of the same

things all the time. I would pay plenty right now for some ham, an apple pie, a cornstarch pudding (with raisins), a section of sponge cake, enough apple butter to camouflage three or four slices of bread, and a peck of Baldwin apples. That will do for a beginning, and I will telegraph from New York to give you notice. Do you get the point? Perhaps I had better close before drawing any more pictures of eatables. Hope you are well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

The boys celebrated with a bang. Wine flowed and a few of our men took their firearms outside and in violation of regulations fired them into the air. I was working in the oilhouse at the time and we heard some of the bullets come down on the roof. M.P.'s soon put a stop to the shooting but no charges were pressed against offenders. No harm was done, and an amount of steam was let off by the celebrants who all woke up next morning with headaches. The camp guardhouse was full of inebriates that night.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703

Dear Folks: - I am writing letters again and the sun is shining this morning, an unusual occurrence here in the Meuse valley this time of year. It is mild now; our coldest weather came two months ago with the ground freezing for a couple of days. Snow falls occasionally but soon melts. Were it not for the rain, overcoats or slickers would not be necessary much of the time. Dampness is ever present.

New Year's Day passed without much notice except for a brief celebration at midnight. Some of the boys "hit up" the "vin" as the French say, meaning wine. A lot of ammunition was sent skyward and the locomotives let loose a chorus of whistling for a few minutes. We were paid the day before and so had money on hand.

An oilhouse friend and I had a little celebration on our own. We bought five francs' worth of steak in the local store and asked a French woman to cook supper for us. She supplied some of the famous fried potatoes, coffee and bread. The kitchen was clean and both husband and wife very friendly. We managed to carry on a conversation in broken French, German, and English. The lady was very proud of her cooking, and we praised it to the skies. The food was good and a welcome relief from that served in our mess hall. We will return later for another meal. We both decided to write a description of our New Year's celebration for the folk back home. The cooking stove was a queer little box-like affair and the table was set much like those at home.

Thursday evening we had a pie, coffee, and cigar session at the Masonic Club. After the feed I was honored by being elected president for the ensuing month. There is not much work connected with the office.

While writing, I am drinking some of the finest coffee that can be obtained over here. The Salvation Army people make excellent coffee and 50 centimes (10 cents) buys all one can drink. Whenever you see the Salvation Army holding a street meeting give them a contribution and think of me. The Salvation Army represents practical Christianity at its best. The "Y" does a great piece of work too, but its working capital is much greater than that of the "Army".

The educational work is to begin as soon as supplies arrive. The post adjutant told me that I would be released from railroad duty and assigned to the "Y" when the work was started. The "Y" secretary has asked me to outline a course in civil government and citizenship to offer all comers. At last I am getting into something in my own field. I will write Prof. Layton at Kent and tell him of it.

I have decided to send a box of souvenirs home; carrying them will be risky business and we will be issued whole new outfits at the port of embarka-

tion. You will find in the box the following articles: a band ring made of German airplane metal (plane shot down near Verdun) to be given to Paul; a match box made from a German "77" shell case and German rifle bullets, to belong to Wilber; a collection of coins to be kept for me and when I return I will finish them up as souvenirs for other members of the family. A Masonic emblem marked "Thrall 170," is for Grandpa Foote. I tried to get an I.O.O.F. Emblem for Father but so far have not succeeded. There may be unmarked articles in the box and they may be given to members of the family who express a desire for them. I am well and feeling fine. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Making souvenirs became a big and interesting business in our company as well as in others. German shell cases and French coins were turned into many forms and some of the boys became skilled in the work. Idle time helped the cause along and tools were "borrowed" from the shops and kept under bunks in the barracks. A few of our skilled workers soon were doing a thriving business making and selling souvenirs and I bought two or three of the articles mentioned in the letter above. One of the shop foremen came into the oilhouse one night complaining about the loss of tools and vowing to raise "more hell than any two other men could think of," and he did. Next morning (Sunday) we had an unannounced barracks inspection with each man standing at his bunk. Two sergeants carrying a box followed an officer down each aisle, and the men were ordered to deposit all army tools. Another sergeant inspected bunks, and the officer announced that no penalties would follow inspection this time, but the next would find drastic action. An order came out shortly from headquarters that mutilation of French currency should cease forthwith. Men bought their own tools after this demonstration, and we had no further complaints. The foreman meant what he said.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, January 8, 1919

Dear Folks: - Just a few lines to let you know that I am well and that good fortune is still with me. Twenty-four men from Company N have been granted fourteen-day leaves, and I am included. Seven days are allowed for traveling to and from the leave center and the other seven days are spent at the center. We may go to Nice, a winter resort on the Mediterranean sea near the Italian border. A man just back from Nice tells us that the weather is warm, flowers blooming, and birds are singing. Some place! I know I shall enjoy it.

Government stands all expenses and there are many places of interest nearby including the famous Monte Carlo. Soldiers are permitted to go over into Italy to a town near the frontier. I am very fortunate in being given a leave with the first contingent from Company N since something might turn up cancelling all leaves. I will tell you about the trip when I return and, if possible, will write from the leave center.

We learned from today's papers of the death of Col. Theodore Roosevelt. His death removes one of America's greatest fighters. The country has lost one of its most representative citizens and one of the greatest leaders in our history.

The only mail I have received since December 27 was a letter and Christmas card from Kent and they had been on the road since December 1. I have hopes for a whole armful of mail when it does come. Another company left camp today for work farther up the line. I read in today's paper that General Pershing wants to make it possible for soldiers to visit European countries if they so desire after their companies are ordered home. I shall inquire into the matter and take such a trip if possible. My leave will give me some travel and may take me near Earl Welker's and Wilber Foote's stations.

If I need money, it can be sent by draft on a New York bank. The home bank

can advise you on necessary steps to be taken. If a sudden need arises, the draft can be cabled. The university or travel projects could come about quickly.

Will close for this time hoping this finds you all well and I know you are now in winter. Keep on writing--the letters will get here somehow, sometime.

Love,

Gilbert.

We left camp on January 13 on leave, and I did not write a letter home again until January 26, the date of our return. While on leave, I sent home numerous post cards and two packages. The next letter and comment following covers in general the journey to Nîmes and return.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703

Dear Folks: - It has been two weeks since I last wrote a letter to you and during that time I have done many of the things I have long wanted to do. But before I tell you about my "leave," I must say that our mail delay ended while I was away. I found waiting for me twenty-one letters and seven rolls of papers, and of course I dived into them at once. This was my first mail since December 27.

I will not give you too many details concerning my travels now, preferring to wait until I return home and then in person can do a much better job. These two weeks are the best so far that I have spent in the army.

Our party, twenty-four strong, left camp January 13, journeying first to Bar-le-Duc and then to Paris by way of the Château-Thierry battlefield. We were in Paris from midnight until 6:00 a.m. and stayed at the "Y" Hotel. We traveled to Clermont, a city in the Cevennes Mountains, and stayed there over night, arriving in Nîmes, our leave center, next day. I mentioned in my last letter that we might go to Nice. I am pleased that we did not go to Nice; Nîmes was

much better from the standpoint of historical interest and study.

We stayed in an old French hotel, centuries old. The floors are of stone and well worn down from long usage. We ate French food served in courses and to us the serving was very slow. I slept in an old-fashioned bed on a feather tick with another over me.

Nîmes is a famous old city and has many relics from Roman civilization. Arles, its neighbor, is also famous in history and is a very interesting place. I sent many cards home and to my friends elsewhere with pictures and explanations of important things and places. We visited a beach on the Mediterranean sea on my twenty-fourth birthday, and I gathered shells to send home.

I visited Avignon, a city where the Roman Catholic popes once lived for almost a century, exploring old castles and cathedrals rich in history of the past. I really cannot do justice to these places in writing so will fill you in later.

On the way back to Abainville we spent a day in Paris and used every minute looking around. I visited Napoleon's tomb, the Tuilleries, the Eiffel Tower, the Cathedral of St. Madeleine, the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Champs D'Elysee, and many other places. I saw the place where the peace conference is being held and the hotels where many of the delegates are staying, including President Wilson's. We did not see Mr. Wilson but did see his automobile.

We ate at a Red Cross canteen and were given directions for finding our way about. Can you imagine me strolling about Paris and taking in the sights of the city that is just now the center of world interest? This is a great time in which to be living, and so far the high point in my own life.

The university project seems to have blown up. The Captain investigated the chances for me and reported that nothing could be done. He was very fine to do this for me, and I surely appreciated being placed on the first "leave" list.

I have been looking for a suitable souvenir for you, Mother; so while in Nîmes I purchased a set of spoons, a dozen all, and mailed them home. I also mailed a box of Mediterranean sea shells.

One of my letters was from Earl Welker telling me that he had been transferred. He is now in the army of occupation in Germany and will be delayed in getting home. The transfer accounts for the slowness of his mail in delivery home. I am enclosing his letter and you can pass it along to his parents.

Earl was in Sorcy when the Armistice was signed. Sorcy is eighteen miles from here, and I have been there several times. He probably passed through Abainville either on the highway or on the railroad. Wilber Foote may be on his way home. He is badly needed at home, and I hope he soon is discharged from the service. Rumor has us moving February 15, just a rumor, nothing more.

We are well supplied with clothes. When socks develop holes, we turn them in and are given new ones. Food is plentiful but lacks much variety. And we still talk about what we will do when we get home. Yes, home never looked so good as now.

So old Charley Bowman is dead. "Better off" I suppose is the general opinion. Charley was his own worst enemy. Was he buried at township expense? And what became of his dog? Sam wrote me a letter telling about his experience with the "flu." Tell Clara I will answer her letters soon. Clara has an original system of spelling and penmanship, but I do appreciate her letters.

I had another photograph made in Nîmes and am enclosing some of the prints. This is a much better job than the one made in Gondrecourt. I did not like that one at all.

I will close now and be ready for the questions when I get home. The two weeks in Nîmes balances my army accounts very nicely. I am way ahead. Love,

Gilbert.

Earl Welker was transferred to the 4th Division just as fighting came to a close. He marched into Germany with the occupying forces and was moved about a few times, thus accounting for his mail difficulties. He was appointed to the teaching force in a Post school and had a fine time in Germany, arriving home about the same time as did I in July, 1919. Wilber Foote and Frank Thornburg arrived home earlier than did Earl and I. Wilber's sister Anna, a nurse mentioned before in this narrative, came home on the same transport as did I, but neither of us was aware of the other's presence.

My college studies in European History had given me an invaluable background for my experiences on leave. I shared my knowledge of French history and geography with my fellow travelers but leaned over backward to avoid a "know it all" attitude. One of our group, Andrew O'Brien, a French-speaking Canadian, acted as interpreter when we needed language assistance. Two of our non-coms, Sgt. Cecil King and Sgt. Charles Basham, were in command of the party and very ably carried out their responsibilities. The train ride from Paris to Nîmes was most interesting, and our experiences in the dining car were novel and rewarding. The train was crowded and we took turns standing in the corridors. We passed through many French cities and towns whose names stand out on history's pages and the ever-changing scenery held our interest throughout the day.

Late in the day we arrived in Clermont-en-Ferrand, a small city in the Cevennes Mountains, left the train, and were sent to a hotel for the night. Supper in a good restaurant was followed by various and sundry explorations. Several of our party chose a round of night clubs and doubtful pleasure spots, while others sought out less spectacular diversion. Knowing something of the history of Clermont and its connection with the Crusades, I proposed an excursion to the top of a hill in the center of town, and several of my companions

accepted. We walked slowly and inspected shop and store windows along the way. As we neared the summit, one lad discovered a statue and, of course, wondered whose it was and what it meant. I told him to look at the base of the statue carefully and he would see an inscription proclaiming that on that spot Peter the Hermit stood when he first called the people to enlist for the First Crusade. And sure enough, when we came within reading distance, there it was. I had remembered my history lessons very well in this instance and was immediately asked to furnish further detail. On the way back I gave the boys a brief and boiled-down version of the crusades and their objectives and results. One worthy observed that he thought now that it paid off to go to school. He was a "drop out" in the sixth grade.

Our time in Nimes passed quickly. The "Y" organized sightseeing trips for us to the nearby cities of Arles and Avignon, and to the Mediterranean beach. We also were given directions for explorations within the city of Nimes. In both Nimes and Arles were many old Roman buildings in varying states of preservation and not far away was a well-preserved section of an aqueduct dating back to 200 A.D. In both cities were found coliseums built by the Romans shortly after the birth of Christ and both are occasionally used to this day. Although partially in ruins the two structures stand as monuments of the past and reminders of the grandeur of Rome. Weather in Nimes was mild and like that of Ohio in May. On one afternoon the "Y" supplied us with baseball equipment, and we played a five-inning game in the old Roman arena heretofore described.

Nimes was known as the "City of the Silversmith" and I purchased and sent to Mother a set of a dozen teaspoons. The silversmith spoke English and was an authority on local history, and I spent a couple of hours in his shop. The Napoleon tradition was still strong in Nimes where the great soldier and leader

always had a powerful following. January 20 was my birthday and I furnished white wine for our evening meal. I was also called upon to tell the boys something about Avignon where we were to go the following day, and I responded by telling them about the exile of the popes in the fourteenth century. We had several Catholics in our party who had more than a passing interest in the story, none having heard it before. Avignon is one of the few walled cities in France and the old wall is kept up as a tourist attraction. Arles had long since lost its ancient importance as a religious center and port city. The Rhone river which once carried seaborne commerce to the city is silted now and only light draft vessels travel on it, another monument to the past. The old Roman cemetery was another place of interest with its stone tombs, all broken and in ruins. We did find one tomb serving as a dwelling place for a non-descript hobo, who was proud of the fact that he used it rent free and with no interference from local authorities.

The Palace of the Popes was in an excellent state of preservation and a most interesting place as was the Castle of Philip Augustus across the river from it. Candles still burned around the tombs of the popes and the papal throne still stood in the audience chamber. The church of St. Tromphine in Arles commanded interest due to the fact that the saint was a friend of St. Paul, the hero of the New Testament Book, "Acts of the Apostles." I was loath to leave this part of France but our time rapidly drew to a close and we reluctantly bade farewell to Nîmes and vicinity and boarded a night express for Lyon and Paris.

Our day in Paris is described in my letter and was thoroughly enjoyed. Another train journey carried us back to Bar-le-Duc where we were met by a truck which completed the homeward journey and we arrived in camp, tired but happy. We had no casualties and came back in good health with much to tell to excite envy on the part of our comrades.

During our absence a never-to-be-forgotten incident happened in camp. A French troop supply train was accidentally derailed at the edge of our railroad yards, and our wrecking crew was summoned to help clear the tracks. The train was carrying a few cars loaded with wines and liquors, and the containers were scattered about on the ground. The wrecking crew helped themselves, and word soon spread, bringing dozens of Company N men and others to the scene. The whole camp seemed to go on a binge, and the French vigorously protested. The officers wisely permitted the binge to wear itself out a bit and then ordered all remaining bottles turned in. Response was good and there were few bottles remaining. When the French turned in a bill for the wine, our authorities responded by presenting a charge for use of the wrecking equipment. Excitement soon subsided and there were still echoes from it when we returned to camp. I found a couple of bottles hidden in my bunk and on advice of a neighbor turned them in. The incident is still kept alive in the memories of Company N men and always comes up at company reunions.

A.P.O. 703, February 1, 1919

Dear Folks: - The mail orderly, Fred Radikopf, a fine young man and friend to all of us, came in today loaded down with letters, papers, etc. When the yell "mail" resounded through the barracks, I climbed out of bed; further sleeping became impossible. My share: a letter from you, one from Edith and Paul, two from Aunt Libby, and one from Aunt Nellie. The mail tangle seems to have been solved.

I am happy to know that you are all well. We get reports in the Paris papers of continued spread of influenza and wonder about it. Hope you continue escaping it.

The clipping about Brest supplements what the papers here have been saying about it. According to our reports Secretary Baker ordered an investigation and

the Commandant stated that conditions had been improved. The tent camps were bad enough when we were in Brest last fall, and I can readily imagine their condition now. Of course there are many mistakes made and blunders committed and probably many of them will be unearthed when once the boys get home. Every war has its aftermath of investigations.

Our company has been very fortunate over here in having good quarters and good food, but I have talked with men who were not so fortunate. Censorship forbids too many details. No doubt you have heard much, but do not form positive opinions until you talk with the boys themselves, discounting the papers. You have also no doubt heard criticism of the "Y." It stands to reason that an organization that has grown as rapidly as the "Y" would get a few wolves mixed in with the lambs. It only goes to prove that man in his present state of creation is not yet perfect. I have found that the best thing to do over here is to look out for one's self, keep still, and hope for the best.

So W---B--- has married and rented a farm. Now that the war is over, I suppose the old man no longer needs his valuable services on the farm at home. The "slacker"! After being in the army a few months, I have formed a very poor opinion of the fellows whose backbones are composed of a mixture of cheap glue and pine tar.

Now that the university project seems to have failed, I wish to get home as rapidly as steam, electricity, foot, or any other kind of power can carry me. I have seen and experienced many things and will be satisfied when under Dad's roof again; I will be in no hurry to leave again.

Last night the 35th Division entertainers were here and gave us a fine program. There are professional stage men in their ranks and I hope the troupe tours the States. Tonight an artillery company is giving a program which promises to be good.

I hope Wilber Foote soon gets home; he is needed on the farm, and spring work will soon begin. We will all be home after a while, we know, but waiting is not pleasant. Have Welkers heard from Earl yet? In case my letter of information about him failed to reach you, I will repeat that he is now in Germany in the Army of Occupation and in the 4th Division. Transfers account for the failure of communications.

Tell Aunt Libby not to worry about my developing bad habits. If smoking is the worst habit a man picks up over here, he is lucky. The worst enemy of the American soldier here is the devil in the form of wine, women, and song. I have had no trouble resisting all three. The army either makes or breaks character, and the breaks usually started in men before they reached the army. There is no middle ground. You will see some changes in me, I hope, for the better.

There is not much doing here now. We go to work, but there isn't much to do. We will be moving some day and somewhere, soon we hope. Must close now and answer a few letters I have waiting. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Life in the barracks soon settled down into a routine. Meals were served on a regular schedule and work hours were definite and well balanced. I worked the night shift from November until I left the Company in March. I ate the evening meal with the Company and reported to the night mess for a meal before going to work at 11:00. Coming off duty at 7:00 in the morning, I had breakfast with the boys and passed up the midday meal altogether unless unusual circumstances arose. I had plenty of time during the afternoons for such chores as washing clothes, bathing and shaving. Writing letters and necessary errands fitted into my afternoon hours as did occasional excursions to Gondrecourt and other places. Sometimes in good weather a group of off-duty men

would go out to the rifle range and practice shooting. We were encouraged to go to the range and were supplied with ammunition.

Camp facilities for laundry were notably lacking, and I never could make myself like to do washing with scrub brush and hand power. An oilhouse friend took me with him one day to meet an elderly woman who was doing his washing, and I employed her for a small wage to do mine. This woman and her husband were refugees from a community north of us that had been overcome by the Germans early in the war. The husband could speak English and earned a scanty living by doing piece work for a small local furniture factory. We kept the man supplied with American cigarettes and the woman with soap; both were happy to serve us and we became firm friends. Laundry work and mending were done satisfactorily, and we learned much French history from the man, who well remembered the war of 1870-71.

Abainville, France, A.P.O., February 6, 1919

Dear Folks: - A few lines today to let you know that I am well and that we are still in Abainville with not much to do.

Aunt Libby's letter dated January 17 came today and it contained a lot of news. I am sorry to hear of the deaths of Mrs. Tennyson Swank and Will Swank. The "flu" is causing more deaths than the war. We must hope for the best.

Roy Marts and Sam Wharton were fortunate in getting home as soon as they did. I have not had a reply to my last letter to Wilber Foote so am assuming that he is on his way home. A move here seems to be in the making. Lists of things and equipment to be carried have been posted, boxes made and stenciled, and non-commissioned officers given instructions. Army orders and doings are very mysterious affairs, so do not build up too many hopes for my early appearance at home.

We had another good show last night and the "Y" was crowded. No one here is overworked and all of us were able to attend. We are all restricted to

camp now on account of two or three men raising some kind of trouble in the village. Our old friend "narrow gauge" is almost dead with just enough work now to keep the force on the job.

Were you able to find the city of Nîmes on the map? Have the boxes and cards arrived yet? I wish I had another furlough starting tomorrow. We will be paid tonight, a regular proceeding since coming here. Only one month's pay was late. There is always a lot of hilarity when pay call sounds. Two of my letters from Aunt Libby had been opened before they arrived and the gum and blades were missing. We can buy both here now in plentiful quantities. Hope this finds you all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Commenting on laundry difficulties in the preceding section leads me to include a description of the Abainville public laundry, and it was duplicated in thousands of other places. Not only in France but in other countries women have for centuries used rivers and small streams for laundry purposes. A flat stone and a wooden paddle are necessary implements. In Abainville a neatly constructed masonry house without walls extended out and over one side of the small river. The bank was furnished with smooth stones placed at the water's edge. Dipping clothes into the water and then placing them on the stones the women paddled them vigorously, repeating the dipping and turning the clothes until cleaning was accomplished. It was also a social occasion, and the laughter and gabble were to us a never-ending source of amusement. If soap was available, it was rubbed in as the paddle moved up and down with conversation never lagging.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, February 10, 1919

Dear Folks: - I have not heard from you this week but am writing anyway, hoping that there are no more mail delays. I received another letter from Earl yester-

day and I hope his family are hearing from him by this time. I just finished writing a letter to him, relaying news I had, with the thought that he might not yet be hearing from home; and he had not ten days ago.

The ink I am using has been frozen, thus accounting for poor quality and blots. We are still on the job and working a little. The 14th Engineers are leaving this week; they have been in France eighteen months and served part of the time with the British army.

I read everything I can lay my hands on; and when that is exhausted, I go to bed and sleep. We are restricted to camp, and I cannot get out for walks as I did earlier. The weather is quite cold now, and the sun shines more than it did some time ago. We were prepared for a warmer break, but the weather suddenly turned colder. I am growing lazy. I did my own washing for a long time, but now I hire an old French woman to do it and she does a good job.

I have been fortunate in having a job that keeps me dry and warm, and I never have to stand inspection on account of working nights. Last Sunday the boys had to come out with full packs for inspection. Putting a pack together is a real job, and the barracks were not fitting places for preachers while packing was in progress.

I am glad I had the mumps last winter. Several of our boys came down with mumps, and the disease is considered a joke in the army. I do not think mumps a joking matter at all, nor do the men who have them. Our company has been healthy, everything considered. A few men have been in the hospital and we have had only one death, Lt. McClure, who died last fall shortly after we arrived here.

Have the boxes I sent from Nîmes arrived, and if so, in what shape were they? If the boxes came through in good shape I will probably send others. I can't think of anything more to write so will close. Hope this finds you

all well. Love,

Gilbert.

The next letter shows why I had cause for rejoicing again. It was good news and this time plans worked out to my advantage as subsequent letters will set forth. My university dream was soon to be realized.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, February 15, 1919

Dear Folks: - We have had no mail from the States for three weeks but we do get mail from men stationed in France. I had two letters from Earl this week, and he is well and teaching in a Post school in Germany. In Coblentz a few days ago, he saw Harry Randall and my old roommate and friend, Karl Keller. Karl is in the 42nd Division, better known as the "Rainbow," and Earl sent me his address and gave Karl mine. Now Karl and I will soon be in touch with each other. I had not heard from Karl since last fall when he was in Camp Lee.

The university project is on top again. The company commander informed me yesterday that an order had been issued in an altered form. A soldier student will be placed on detached service with an allowance of two dollars per day for food and one dollar per day for room rent. Three of us who are college graduates put in applications and the commander endorsed them. The term is one of three months and ends June 30; the only expense to us is tuition, which amounts to about $50. If I hear favorably from my application, I will send for money.

No doubt you think I change my mind a lot, but in fact the army is very uncertain in its doings and we think accordingly. I dislike putting off my homecoming; but when one considers the opportunities offered, things change. My application is made for entrance to a British university as a knowledge of the French language is necessary for admission to a university in France.

As it is, our company may not be home much sooner than will I. The company may be shifted to Conflans, a town near Metz and the German border,

and that means a longer stay. It is now up to the authorities whether I go or stay. Three months in England will be a great experience and a term in an English university should give me an excellent basis for study in Chicago University later. We will take with us full equipment with the exception of arms. Brest is in the headlines again. President Wilson goes home by way of Brest, and I hope he inspects the place. The camp is about four miles from Brest and spreads over hills and valleys. It was bad enough last fall when we were there. Somebody blundered and the boys have had to pay in terms of extreme discomfort and sickness.

We had another good show last night, and tonight we have a basketball game. The lights are going out now so I will close. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, February 17, 1919

Dear Folks: - I just received two letters from you dated January 14 and 20. Our mail came yesterday and today by the bagful. The last tieup lasted three weeks and applied only to that coming from the States. I also had a letter from Aunt Libby and two rolls of papers, 19th and 20th. A letter came from Clara dated January 26, one from Bernice dated January 14, and six from friends dating from December 28 to January 28. Three copies of the Kent Tribune also made their appearance. I am now in touch with Karl Keller. Karl did not see action and was transferred to the Rainbow Division Signal Corps as a replacement. He is enjoying himself as much as possible in a German town near Coblentz.

I have not heard from Sylvester Summers yet. I wrote to him as soon as I read your letter giving me his address. Sylvester may have been called into service and addresses lost as often happens. I never received a letter from

Dad dated November 26. The last from him was one he started and Mother finished. The letters that came containing pictures showed Wilber in uniform and pictures of the little fellows. I remember commenting on both sets of pictures. No doubt a few letters have been lost in transit. I try to answer all questions you ask. Mail does get tied up and some of it looks worse for wear when it does arrive.

I am sure I have received most of your letters and papers, and the lost will probably show up sooner or later. The papers keep me busy for a time and then I pass them along to the other Knox County boys. Harris sometimes receives papers from home; but Householder never does, and he is happy to have them. His mother died since he entered the army service. Householder was one of two of our boys who were under fire, being on detached service at the front for a month.

My last letter ended suddenly when the lights failed due to boiler trouble in the powerhouse. The break lasted for a long time, and we had to resort to candles for light. To say the least, it wasn't much fun.

I am happy to know that Earl's family is hearing from him now. I relayed all the news I had at hand when I heard of his plight, and it was his first news in four months. Keller has been more fortunate in hearing from his home folk. Karl's health is much improved and he says he can stand anything. He further says he is going to punch the head of the doctor who told him he was due to "check in" unless he got out on a farm or he entered the army. Karl also reminded me that he had won the last bet we made. The agreement was to the effect that the one who married first would eat at the Hollenden at the expense of the other. Karl will be married as soon as he gets out and lands a good job. I am hoping that Karl and I can sometime get into the same school system. I know the young lady very well; she is a very

fine person and will be a good wife for Karl.

I have met many fine men in the army. One man, a college student and teacher, who bunks next to me has applied for admission to the university project. I have many friends in Company N and fine fellows they are. Today the company commander asked me to write our company history, which will become part of the History of the 21st Engineers and published after the war. First Lieutenant William Bruckman is now in command of Company N, Captain Cannon having been transferred elsewhere.

I am now known as the Company Historian on account of my knowledge of French history, which has helped pass away many of our long winter evenings when we gather about the stove, and someone springs a question concerning Napoleon, Louis XIV, or some other character who made a name for himself. I am glad I have something to talk about at least.

Bernice wrote me a very nice letter, which shows so well the progress she is making in school. Her handwriting is much better than mine which, I fear, is growing steadily worse. I am looking forward to the British university (if I am chosen) with growing eagerness. Courses in a foreign school should help me in getting a good position when I return to the teaching field. I may ask President McGilvrey for assistance and recommendation.

Howard and Lillie Gregg are making a good start and should do well on the Braddock farm. Howard is a good farmer and has a good eye for appearance. What is Martin Welker doing now for a living? It seems strange to think of Martin being married as it seems so recently that he came to our yard to play kid games. Life is a swiftly moving drama, almost like a movie. It seems as yesterday that I was a schoolboy in Brick school, fishing at the railroad bridge, and having no responsibilities whatsoever.

Shakespeare once said that Life was only a stage and mortals merely the

players; and he was right. I was aware of January 20 being my birthday and I spent part of it at Avealas on the Mediterranean seashore. One writer has said that life is a road along which we pass but once and from which there is no return; so let us make the most of it as we go. "Let us so order our lives," he said, "that each foot of the journey will be a pleasant memory of useful action when we reach the stage of completion and look out over the valleys and plains of the Great Unknown. Therein lies man's greatest reward in that he has been a smooth-running part in the great drama that closes as mysteriously as it begins." Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, February 24, 1919

Dear Folks: - Your last letter came Friday and along with it a roll of Plain Dealers and Youth's Companions. I read the marked column with interest although I do not agree with its arguments. My choice for Republican presidential nominee lies among the following: Senators Harding, Lodge, and Johnson, General Wood and Judge Hughes. The country is due for a change in administration, but I do think President Wilson and his advisors have done great things.

The old Youth's Companion always looks good; please renew my subscription when it falls due in March or April. When I was in school in Kent, I always bought a Plain Dealer on my way to breakfast and read while waiting for my grub. I wish I could get it right off the press here. We get the European edition of The New York Herald, printed in Paris, and the British Daily Mail. They are dailies and are four-page affairs, good, but not up to American standards. Our army paper, Stars and Stripes, comes out each Saturday and is good.

According to your letters I will not go hungry when I return. I will surely appreciate home cooking after a year of army chow. I feel now that I

could eat two gallons of ice cream at a sitting; one of my first moves when I get off the boat will be toward an ice-cream stand. The last ice cream I had was bought on the ferry that carried us from Jersey City to Hoboken.

I had letters yesterday from Wilber Foote and Earl Welker. Wilber is now with a supply company, and Earl has heard from home and is enjoying himself as best he can in Germany. He is applying for university appointment.

We had another good show here last week and a band concert last night. Church services were held Sunday evening, and, all in all, time passes and we do little work that amounts to anything. If I am appointed to it, the university work will be a godsend to me.

I am enjoying a day off and will go to Gondrecourt on a pass. We are still restricted to camp, and passes are necessary to get by the military police. If the rain holds off, I will come back by a road I have not traveled since last fall when the weather was good. Hope you are all well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our Catholic men went to mass in the village church. Protestant services were held in the "Y" and not well attended. Chaplains did not often come our way, at least regularly, and the "Y" people did the best they could with lay leadership.

Abainville, France, A.P.O. 703, March 2, 1919

Dear Folks: - It is now 2:30 a.m. and I am at work, just waiting for quitting time. My shift gained an hour tonight when the clocks were moved up an hour. We have our time problems here, too. Your last letter came yesterday along with one from Harry Welker and Aunt Libby. Another roll of papers came and are being read avidly by the Knox County boys.

I am happy to know that the boxes from Nîmes arrived in good shape and

that applies to the box from here. Dad's souvenir will be along soon. While in Paris I saw what was left of a Zeppelin, engine and framework. It was the L-49 and was shot down after bombing Paris. I managed to pull off a piece of metal and will have a ring made from it by a friend who is a real craftsman. The boys with me were "gassing" with the old French guide while I was securing the metal.

We have had no more feeds at the Frenchman's house since restrictions were placed on us. Here is the way the potatoes are fried. They are cut in long slices and fried in a pan of melted grease. They are then put in a wire basket and held near the flames, singeing off the grease and making them crisp. Try it, and see if it works.

We are still on the job and doing nothing most of the time. Friday morning I was called to the adjutant's office and assured that in all probability I would be sent to England, provided, of course, nothing happened to change things. I will write before leaving here and only send for money when I am sure of going. Mail will be forwarded from here, and I will send my new address as soon as I have one.

I was promoted yesterday to first-class private along with twenty-three others. I will now receive $36 per month. Charles Cervenka of Mount Vernon was promoted to the rank of sergeant. Charles is foreman of the locomotive repair shop.

Let us hope that the coming spring will finally banish the "flu" for all time. I am sorry to learn of illness in the Moore home. I am well and now weigh 200 pounds. My friends here say they can scarcely recognize me now as the skinny fellow who came over with them last fall. Hope you are well.

Love to all,

Gilbert.

Before my next letter was written from Le Havre, France, the quick march of events almost overwhelmed me. Early on March 3 I was summoned to the office and told to be ready to move that night; and believe me, I moved. A full description follows later in this narrative.

Le Havre, France, March 5, 1919

Dear Folks: - By the time this letter reaches you I will be in school in England in a university not chosen yet. It is 11:30 a.m. now, and I leave for Southampton, England at 3:00 p.m. Just as I came from work Monday morning, an order came for me to leave in the evening for England.

I made up my pack, received my traveling orders and records, and at 6:00 p.m. bade farewell to my comrades and had a last look at the camp that has for six months sheltered me. I went by train from Gondrecourt to Sorcy but failed to get on the Paris express, it being too crowded with passengers. A friendly captain offered me a ride in his automobile to Commercy where I could get another train if I would help him with his baggage, some of which could not be checked. He checked my pack with his baggage, and I in turn gave him assistance.

I arrived in Paris last night about 6:00 and left at 10:15 for Le Havre, a port city on the English Channel. I arrived here this morning about 8:00 and am now in the "Y," having just eaten a good dinner.

There are many soldiers here headed for English universities and I hope Earl or Karl, or both show up, and both have applied. I was sorry to leave the boys back at Abainville and I hope they get home before June 30, the date when my school work ends.

I intend to see London and as many other interesting places as possible. I wish you could have been with me in Paris last night and witnessed the parade along the boulevards. People were celebrating Mardi Gras and I saw

more people in an hour than ever I did in two hours or more.

Do not write again until I send my new address. My first stop will be in Camp Winchester but only for a short time.

I was the only man from our company chosen to go to England and one of the two from the camp. My comrades all said that I must be wearing a rabbit's foot or carrying a horseshoe. Good fortune is running with me now and I am more than happy that I served in Company N. I brought the company history up to date and received my promotion just in time.

Now when some of the good folk tell you they have sons in Harvard or Yale, you can reply by telling them you have a son in Oxford, Cambridge, or in whatever university is opened to me. The war has meant a great deal to me, and I am sure a wiser lad will return than the one who left last May. Please pass my address around among family and friends, and they will be hearing from me as I hope to hear from them. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

The journey from Abainville to Le Havre was a strenuous one as was often the case in war times. I will elaborate on this and other phases of the project preliminaries in a later section.

A THIRD INTERLUDE

My departure from Abainville and transfer to England marked a definite turning point in my military career and during the last few hours with my comrades in Company N I thought of many things. Suddenly I realized how much I owed to officers and men for friendship and the close associations formed since the preceding July when I became a member of that gallant band and was assigned to Squad 1. As indicated in my letter, I was summoned to the orderly room just after breakfast by Lt. Sodestrom, who told me to wash up and get into uniform; my orders had come through and I was to report to the adjutant within thirty minutes. Lt. Sodestrom accompanied me to headquarters where I was informed that I was to leave for England in the evening. Adjutants are busy men and this one tersely gave orders that I was to check with the supply room, exchange used or wornout clothing for new, and take with me full garrison equipment with the exception of a rifle. Travel orders and ration coupons were provided and my service records prepared for transfer. Lt. Sodestrom was ordered to supervise my preparations and report back when I finally checked out. The adjutant shook hands with me and wished me well, and I was on my way to a busy and memorable day.

Word of my imminent departure soon spread among off-duty men and I had many offers of assistance, money included. Our company barber insisted on giving me a free haircut and our tailor offered his services in repairing clothing, replacing buttons, etc. In the supply room my old friend Sgt. Basham made short shrift of anything that appeared worn or not well fitted. Corporal Herb Jenny volunteered to accompany me to the Gondrecourt railway station and give me assistance with my pack. Fred Radikopf, our efficient mail orderly, pressed upon me the importance of sending him my new address as soon as possible. By the time our noon meal was over all hands had heard the news, and I felt very humble and grateful for the congratulations and best wishes of my fellow soldiers, many of whom I scarcely

knew by name. I was to hear many times the greetings of "rabbit's foot" and "horseshoe," before the day was over. I shall never forget the cheering I received when I left the barracks for the last time. The boys were sincerely pleased to have one of their number get a good break. The officers, too, added their good wishes, and I am ever grateful to them for their help. Lieutenants Bruckman and Smith attend our reunions to this day, and we never forget.

Herb Jenny and Bill Schneyer accompanied me to the station and saw me off on the train. Herb had relatives in England and would have enjoyed going along if such possibility had existed. I left that train at Sorcy and prepared to board the Paris-bound express at midnight. To my amazement and sorrow I could not get aboard in the short time the train stood at the station. My heavy pack weighed me down, and from the last compartment I attempted to board came a strong push that sent me backwards and over. As I returned to the waiting room, a sympathetic travel sergeant who had checked my orders told me that another train would come through next morning and advised that I go over to a nearby laundry company and ask for shelter until morning. Dead tired and beat, I followed the sergeant's advice and was taken in by the man in charge, given a bunk, and fed next morning.

Returning to the station, I found a captain waiting for the train. We were both informed that the train would pause only a few seconds and we might have difficulty getting aboard. The travel sergeant advised that we go to Commercy, a larger town a few miles distant where the same train stopped for a much longer period. The captain had been brought to the station in an old Ford, and the driver was waiting. The captain told me that he would get me on the train and check my baggage with his, if I in turn would help with baggage that could not be checked. The captain limped from an injury which excited sympathy from the train people, and I was permitted to help him into his first-class accommodations and remain with him. The captain was a good actor, and the limp grew steadily

worse when a French chef de gare questioned my presence. The train stood in Commercy for fifteen minutes, and then we were off for Paris. I helped the friendly captain off the train, retrieved my pack, and set out to see as much of Paris as a few hours would permit. The pack was a troublesome encumbrance, and I checked it with the Red Cross. Mardi Gras was being celebrated, and the streets were crowded. I had no trouble finding good food, and the weather was fine. My travel orders were very explicit; I had no trouble finding the station from which the Le Havre train started.

The train being crowded, I stood throughout the journey of several hours. Memories of that journey are jumbled. I was so tired that I can remember only the swaying of the coach as I hung on to a strap and from time to time fell asleep standing. Arriving in Le Havre, we were taken to a barracks for a few hours of rest. My letter told how part of the day was spent while we were waiting to go aboard the Channel steamer Yale. The night crossing was uneventful, and I slept most of the time, anchored to a bench by my belt. Next morning we disembarked in Southampton.

The majority of passengers on the Yale were American soldiers university bound. We were given instructions when and where to report for transportation to Camp Winchester and then given "liberty." Hearing English spoken again was a delightful experience, and we soon found a bank where we could change our francs into pounds, shillings, and pence. Nearby were several good restaurants, and I was one of a party of six to find table space in an almost empty dining room. Inquiry brought the response that ham and eggs could be provided with only a few minutes' delay. "Bring them on," we shouted in unison, "double orders." A whispered conference between our elderly waitress and the proprietor brought the response that our coupons would suffice if we did not come back again that day. How well I remember that meal: ham and eggs, potatoes, coffee, and something

called muffins, dark and hard, but nevertheless good. Our waitress was quite obliging and respectful, and we serenaded her with a couple of our favorite camp songs, polite ones of course. "Lor' bless you, gentlemen," she called as we left.

Enroute our destination orders were changed, and we found ourselves detraining in Camp Knotty Ash in Liverpool. We were assigned barracks and furnished with cots and blankets. Knotty Ash was an English troop camp being used by American soldiers for the time being. Our own organization was temporary, and under command of Col. F. F. Longley, a West Pointer, and thoroughly conversant with student needs and foibles, having himself been a member for several years of the faculty of the University of Chicago. Men continued to come in for two or three days, but Earl Welker and Karl Keller were not among them; they had not been chosen.

During the day we stayed closely in camp while assignments were being made. I soon found that I had received my first choice, University of London, School of Economics. I asked for and received a pass to go downtown in Liverpool and cable home for money. I purchased a camera and had opportunity to look about a bit. We were free to go down town evenings. Returning one evening we saw a riot in progress near the camp gates. Australian, Canadian, and British soldiers were engaged in a fight that lasted until armed guards broke it up. Two or three hundred men were in the brawl in which, as the papers reported next day, several had been seriously injured. Bad blood existed among the three nationalities concerned, and brawls were of frequent occurrence.

Our food was of poor quality, and we were happy when orders came to move out. Our London-bound party boarded a train for that city, and we enjoyed our trip to the limit. At last we had our goals in sight, and we did some more singing, to the delight of our fellow passengers.

Camp Knotty Ash, Liverpool, England, March 6, 1919

Dear Folks: - I am now in another phase of my journey toward a British university whose name I do not yet know. Arriving at Le Havre, I found a large number of soldier students waiting for the boat. We left port in the evening at 10:00; when morning broke, we were in Southampton harbor. The last I saw of France was a signal light on shore. I stretched out on a bench and fell asleep, waking later to the roll and pitch of our channel steamer. Sleep soon overtook me again and held me fast until morning; we were in Southampton. Several of the boys suffered from seasickness but this time I never felt a qualm.

We were dismissed at the American Hdq. Office at 9:00 a.m. and immediately made a dash for restaurants. I had a good breakfast of ham and eggs costing me three shillings or about seventy cents in our money. The ham-and-egg breakfast was the first of its kind I had eaten since leaving home and was very good. I hope the hens are laying when I get home. We found a bank and had our money changed into British currency.

At 1:00 p.m. we boarded a train, and an hour later it left the station, making few stops. Orders were changed, and we passed up Camp Winchester, going on instead to Camp Knotty Ash near Liverpool.

We arrived at midnight and were issued blankets and assigned quarters. This morning we registered and will be assigned to colleges later. I had hopes of meeting Earl and Karl here, but to date have not seen them. Both made applications but further than that I have heard nothing.

Knotty Ash is a British camp now being used by American troops. There are many men here on their way home, and how fortunate they are!

The money system in England is a complicated affair. In France paper money looked like soap wrappers and here it resembles wall paper. There are pennies, shillings, crowns, half crowns, etc. I had about $65 and when it was changed into

English currency it amounted to 13 pounds and a few shillings and pence. In the meantime I will ascertain the amount I will need from home and cable you. By the time you get this letter, the matter will have long since been settled. My pay and allowances will take care of most of my expenses other than tuition and travel. I will write again as soon as I receive further definite information. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Camp Knotty Ash, Liverpool, England, March 11, 1919

Dear Folks: - We are still awaiting our assignments to universities. The task of classifying presents difficulties, but authorities expect to have us on our way soon. Class work begins early in April, giving us plenty of time for travel before we settle down. I am planning to go to Ireland, Scotland, and many other places while I am in England. When announcement was made concerning the beginning date of class work, I found that I would have some time for travel and consequently sent my cablegram at once. An additional sum of $50 will take care of my needs until our pay and allowances come through. It may seem that I have changed my mind several times, but one never knows what to expect in the army.

My premium payment to the Midland Life Insurance Company is due April 15, and I will appreciate the favor if you will take care of it. I will try not to "bust" you in making payments and advancing funds to me here, and I will be out of the army soon and in position to repay.

I wish you were here to travel with me. I am facing a grand opportunity, and it all seems like a dream.

The real and underlying purpose in sending 2500 college men to England is not altogether for "head cramming with subject matter." The project is also designed to promote better relations and understandings between the two great branches of English-speaking people. The whole enterprise should produce much good. I am

proud of the fact that the army has selected me as one of the 2500 to come here for the short time given us.

I went downtown in Liverpool yesterday. The city has a population of more than a million and resembles American cities very much. I am purchasing a camera and will bring home a picture record of my sojourn in England. I am sorry I did not have a camera in France. Liverpool is situated at the mouth of the Mersey River, and the harbor is one of the world's largest. The docks are floating affairs, rising and falling with the tides. Ships are here from the world over. There are splendid public buildings, and the streets are of comfortable width although crooked in places. Street-car service is excellent, double deckers with women conductors.

I walked out into the country this morning and found the fields green and fresh looking. It rains almost every day, but people say that in April the rains come less frequently and that spring and summer are grand. O yes, there are many "Fords" on the roads and streets, but large touring cars are very few in number.

I have no language difficulties here. People do not speak quite as we do at home, but one soon becomes accustomed to local dialects. I may be puzzled at times, but that is nothing compared to the jabbering we heard among the French. It is also a source of satisfaction to be able to read and understand store and window signs.

The people are very conservative and are not as excitable and vivacious as are the French. There are, of course, exceptions both ways. Stores and business places close on Sundays and everything quiets down.

I understand that the 37th Division (The Ohio National Guard) is now at home, and that the 42nd (Rainbow) is due to sail soon. The 21st Engineers are due to start home soon according to reports. Reports and rumors flood the army, and only a few men in charge know the truth. A good policy is, "wait and see."

I will be writing again soon and this time I am giving you my new address:

Pvt. 1st Class Gilbert Roberts

University Detachment, A.E.F.

American University Union, London Branch,

16 Pall Mall East, London, England, S.W. 1.

Hope this finds you all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

The organization and classifying mill continued to grind. Our eating arrangements produced a minor crisis when the British cooks were discovered cooking potatoes without removing them from the burlap sacks in which they came. Large cooking pots used by the British would hold a whole sackful of potatoes, so why bother to remove the sack until the spuds were ready to serve? We wondered why potatoes were so gritty and sometimes mixed with strings and sticks. Col. Longley fired the cooks and called for volunteers from our number. We had a few cooks or would-be cooks among us, and the matter was settled. Officers and men alike helped serve the meals, and all went well to the end. The British cooks were men recently discharged from the navy and looking for snap jobs with the Americans, who were supposed to have plenty of money and few brains.

Camp Knotty Ash, Liverpool, England, March 15, 1919

Dear Folks: - Your reply cablegram came yesterday and exchanged into English money amounts to twenty pounds, eighteen shillings, and four pence. I think all is set now for the last lap of the race, which I sincerely hope ends in July at home. University courses end June 30.

Men are beginning to leave now for colleges of law, medicine and theology, where courses begin earlier than the others.

My mail has not been forwarded from France on account of my delay in furnishing my new address. I have sent Company N my address now that I have it, and

mail should soon arrive. I have met only a couple of Ohio men here so far. We have a large number of officers here ranging from second lieutenants to lieutenant colonels. The leading colleges and universities of the United States are represented, and I find myself in intellectual company, so to speak.

The sun has been shining for three days now, and birds are beginning to sing, making their presence known. I have purchased a Kodak and am making a few snaps. I will soon have some interesting pictures to send home. You have probably heard of Lord Derby, one of England's outstanding men. The Derby estate is close by Camp Knotty Ash, and we may be permitted to visit it.

We are under orders to stick close to camp during the day and be ready for interviews if necessary. We will be moving out soon. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert

Fickleness on the part of Liverpool weather kept us indoors much of the time. As I remember, there were two or three days when we had rain, snow, and sunshine alternating hour by hour. Dampness and chill rivaled the kind we had in Abainville and all the time our British friends were promising something better next day. Preparations at last were completed, and we moved out of the Liverpool station at 10:00 p.m. on March 20. I had been assigned to the University of London School of Economics.

When I had found that the great majority of soldier students were giving first-place choice to Cambridge and Oxford, I decided to give my first choice to London. The great metropolis offered so much travel and sightseeing within its limits besides being an important railway center, that its facilities were unexcelled as a base. The School of Economics had on its faculty many of the world's best authorities in history, economics, anthropology, and government; and too, being the seat of government, Parliament offered opportunities for first-hand study and observation. I never had reason to regret my choice.

London, England, March 21, 1919

Dear Folks: - At last I have arrived in London, where I shall spend the next three months, or until June 30. We left Liverpool last night at 10:00 and arrived in London about 5:00 a.m. We are staying in one of the "Y" hotels and all accommodations are crowded with incoming students, and Canadian, Australian, and American troops.

I haven't seen anything yet other than large crowds of people. I am resting in my room today, not having had much sleep last night. We were happy to leave Camp Knotty Ash with its poor food and uncomfortable sleeping facilities. We had another typhoid shot, and I will be a bit uncomfortable for a couple of days.

I am going over to the American University Union tomorrow and check for transferred mail, if any. I should be receiving a large amount of mail if the transfer has been made.

The School of Economics and Political Science is only a short distance from my present quarters and presented me with a surprise when I saw it. The building does not resemble our college structures at all. I registered this morning and classroom work begins April 28. Reading courses begin any time but I am doing a bit of sightseeing first.

This morning the sun was shining, but now a heavy mist is falling and soon the city will be enveloped in one of its famous fogs. London always seemed so far away that I can hardly realize now that I am actually in it.

First of all, I want to visit Westminster Abbey where many of England's famous personages have been buried during the last 800 years and where royal coronations are always held. And then I will go to the Tower, an ancient landmark around which so much history has centered. There are enough places of interest to keep one busy a lifetime.

Since I am entering a university here, I am thinking of passing up Chicago

U and making inquiries for positions open next fall. I may not have much choice if I wait until I get home.

The boys are leaving France rapidly now, and the pace should increase when the treaty is signed. My letters will soon contain descriptions of things I see in London. Hope you are all well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

London, England, March 23, 1919

Dear Folks: - This is Sunday evening and I have just had a supper of cold roast beef, potato salad, beets, bread, coffee and fruit. I am staying in a "Y" hotel and eating my meals there. I had a wonderful experience this morning; one that I will always remember as unequalled in any other city I have visited.

Each Sunday morning the "Y" guide, Mr. Jones, takes a party through the slums of London and the Jewish quarters. I had often heard about the Whitechapel district and wished to see it, and I did.

We rode on the subway, there being few surface cars here, and emerged in the part of the city where the famous novelist, Charles Dickens, found most of his best-known characters, Petticoat Lane. The houses are old, dirty, and squalid. The streets are narrow; the people, filthy and defying adequate description.

Children surrounded us, begging for coins and scrambling for the coppers we threw their way. One simply had to fight to keep prying hands out of one's pockets. The Dickens characters were there: old women without teeth and with hair matted with filth, old men with bleared countenances and sunken eyes, children in rags and dirt, everything testifying to a loose-jointed social order.

Business places in London close on Sunday with the exception of those in this part of the city. In the Jewish quarter streets are lined with stands common to any Jewish outdoor market in Europe. Miles of these stands line the

streets and alley sidewalks except where city traffic moves.

Here one can buy anything from a pin to a live goose, dog, rabbit, or cat. One old man may be selling shoes, and another, hardware; another, toys; while the old woman nearby sells hot soup served in dirty bowls at a low price. We did not buy soup.

Other stands dealt in old clothes, drygoods, fish, and on down to rusty nails, bolts, and screws. In one section hawkers sell live chickens, geese, rabbits, ducks, birds, etc. A common spectacle is that of an old woman carrying a crate of live chickens on her head. Nearby one may see a barrel supporting a crate on top of which, standing forlornly, is a rooster mutely proclaiming the sale of poultry. I saw a ragged, dirty, and disreputable-looking turkey gobbler doing such an advertising stunt. Poor fellow, his lordly manner gone, his gills pale, he surveyed the throng as his American brother might the day before Thanksgiving.

Old men turning the handles of grind organs and soap-box orators with nothing as a subject and much to say, both tried to get us to listen. The weighing machine was there and also the man who took and finished pictures in a few minutes.

We kept moving and two and a half hours later came to a quiet section where the air no longer smelled of dead fish, dirty people, and old junk. As we came out, a sailor threw a fit and who could blame him? I had never seen such a conglomeration of people and junk anywhere in my travels; and what an argument for a better social order.

I came back to my dinner a little wiser than I was at breakfast. I had seen slums in Cleveland, Columbus, and even in Paris, all poverty stricken; but the London district is the most extensive and cosmopolitan of the lot. Yesterday's and today's explorations gave me an excellent opportunity to compare

society's highest stratum with its lowest in so far as environments are concerned.

Yesterday I went with a party to visit Windsor Castle, one of the several residences of the royal family. Windsor is a magnificent place, lavishly furnished and containing many rare works of art. The castle is large and well maintained. It is on a hill, near the Thames River, and about twenty miles from London. Windsor was Queen Victoria's favorite residence. We visited the chapel where the royal family worships and saw there in the floor the graves of kings and queens. Among the graves are those of Charles I, Jane Seymour, Henry III, and Edward VII. The present royal family's vault is under the floor of another chapel, the Albert Memorial, but the entrance is from the one I just described. Bodies are lowered into an underground passage through the floor and taken to the vault. Stones in the floor are removed for the occasion. The British like old traditions and keep old customs that to us seem out of date.

Several centuries ago one of the kings founded "The Order of the Garter" and only the king and twenty-five living noblemen could be members at one time. St. George's Chapel in Windsor contains the banners and crests of members. Foreign rulers could be admitted as honorary members, their banners and crests hanging with the others. Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany was an honorary member until the war, when he and five other enemy knight honoraries were expelled. The walls were covered with name plates of dead member knights.

Queen Victoria filled the castle with works of art, fond as she was of commemorating everything in marble. We had an excellent guide who gave us plenty of time. Do you remember the poem, "Curfew shall not ring tonight"? This castle was the setting for the poem, and the old curfew tower still stands.

Not far from Windsor is Stoke Poges Church where Thomas Gray found inspiration for his "Elegy." We visited the church and churchyard and found them as

pictured in paintings and pictures. The "Elegy" is the most widely read poem in the English language, and I had long wished to see the little churchyard that inspired it. One may see the "rugged elms" and the "yew trees" that shade the last resting places of the "fathers of the hamlet." Gray's tomb is a modest pile of bricks by the side of his mother's burial place. The whole place is one of beauty and inspiration. It was too dark to make snapshots so I will return later if I find it possible to do so.

Eton College for boys is within fifteen minutes' walk from Windsor, and we had a rather hurried visit there. I was disappointed in the place in some ways although I understand that tradition rules, and people like tradition. Desks and benches are the ones used two centuries ago and since. Old hewn planks carry the names of many illustrious men in history, and these planks form the desks and benches. The British keep these relics because their ancestors used them, and they have so many historic associations with the past. Before leaving the school, each boy carves his name on the wall; among the names are those of Pitt, Gladstone, Fox, and many others.

The boys wear swallow-tail coats and high silk hats and walk with their hands in their pockets. We wondered just how long one of these young gentlemen would last if he showed up in one of our school yards looking like a small edition of an eighteenth-century nobleman. No doubt within ten minutes the hat brim would be under the chin, the top pushed down on top of the head, and the coat tails tied in a knot. Tradition again. Eton ranks high as an educational institution. The best families send their sons to Eton, and the tuition amounts to $1000 in our money. It is truly a rich man's school and a good one. The courses prepare boys for such universities as Cambridge and Oxford.

The Tower of London and Westminster Abbey are on my program next, and a little later I will tour Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. I hope to visit the

Isle of Man, a very interesting and historic place. My study of London will continue as time permits after school opens. By carefully organizing and budgeting my time, I will be able to cover much territory, keeping my eyes and ears alert at all times. This is an opportunity that perhaps comes only once in a lifetime, and I will do my best to take advantage of it.

Warmer weather will soon be coming your way. Love and best wishes to all,

Gilbert.

The next letter in this narrative was written to my aunt, Miss Elizabeth (Libby) Foote, who kept me supplied with local newspapers and who wrote to me faithfully.

London, England, March 24, 1919

Dear Aunt Libby: - I have not written to you directly for a few weeks, but I know you read my home letters and keep informed concerning my doings and wanderings. In Camp Knotty Ash we labored under disadvantages in writing and indeed in almost every other way. Authorities did the best they could for us, and a temporary organization at best is only a makeshift. I am beginning to feel like the "Wandering Jew," having traveled about so much. I can scarcely persuade myself that I am in the realm of reality.

Yesterday I went with a party on a walking tour of Old London. We visited "Old Curiosity Shop," made famous by Dickens; the "Authors'" quarters where Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith, and others lived; the Bank of England and the Exchange; the residence of the Lord Mayor; Guildhall where Lloyd George makes so many speeches; and lastly the famous Tower of London.

The Tower dates back to 1066 and is dark with age. It is connected with many of England's historic events and has been used in the past as a royal residence, a fortress, a prison, and an arsenal. Many famous prisoners were kept in the Tower, and several of them executed there, including Sir Walter

Raleigh, the Earl of Essex, Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, and Lord Dudley. Queen Elizabeth was a prisoner there while her sister Mary was queen. You will find a chapter in my copy of English History by Cross, that is interesting and informative on the Tudor rulers.

The crown jewels are kept in the Tower and include crowns, scepters, swords, plate, etc. The treasures are valued at three-and-a-half million pounds, and a pound is worth $4.86 in our money. The place is heavily guarded, and thieves would find themselves in difficulty. I saw the dungeons and cells, the chapel, the block and axe used in executions, instruments of torture, and many other historic relics. I am sending home a collection of picture cards; when I get home, I will add details.

Today I visited Westminster Abbey, a veritable shrine of history. Within its walls lie the mortal remains of kings, statesmen, soldiers, authors, and explorers. The British bury their illustrious dead under the floors of their cathedrals, churches, and abbeys; it gives one a curious feeling to stand over graves of persons who have done so much in making history. Queen Elizabeth has a beautiful tomb as do several others. The Abbey dates back to 1000 A.D. Poets' Corner is a little nook containing graves of England's famous writers and tablets memorializing others not buried there. Our own Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is the only American poet recognized with a tablet. Two great poets, Tennyson and Browning, were not buried in the "Corner" but are entombed nearby.

David Livingstone, the great African explorer, has a grave in a conspicuous place with a beautiful inscription on a brass plate. The old "coronation" chair is an object of great and historic interest. It was brought from Scotland by Edward I in 1370 and used ever since in crowning kings and queens in England. Under the chair is the famous "Stone of Scone," brought from Scotland by Edward I along with the chair. Legend claims that the "stone" was brought to Scotland

from Ireland about 600 A.D. and that it was the very same stone that served Jacob as a pillow when he saw angels descending. The chair is a much battered relic black with age and rickety. The British love old things and old traditions.

Of all I have seen so far, the Abbey impressed me most. England's history and literature are ours as well. As you walk along in the abbey, you fancy history looking down, and you unconsciously speak in low tones that seem in keeping with the sacredness of the place. I am planning to attend worship services in both the abbey and St. Paul's. Later I will visit Canterbury, another religious center and seat of the Archbishop, who is Primate of the Church of England.

I will be leaving soon on a tour of the British Isles and will keep you informed by sending cards from stopping places. School work begins April 28 and closes June 30. Of course I wish to get home, but just now I am enjoying myself too much to think about it. Hope you are well and enjoying springtime. Love to all,

Gilbert.

Our soldier students were given the same travel rates on railroads as accorded British counterparts on leave, amounting to approximately a cent per mile in our money. There were rules and regulations pertaining to these bargain rates, but they were not burdensome or bound up in red tape. Our identification cards and a travel permit countersigned by a railway transportation officer brought us quick and courteous service. We were under strict orders from our commanding officer to observe proper conduct regulations at all times. Our uniforms had to conform to garrison standards, and unseemly or rowdy behavior would bring immediate banishment to the army of occupation in Germany. In so far as I know, there were no violations in public or otherwise. We were in-

structed to accept invitations to British homes, if extended, and to attend public meetings when invited. In other words, we were ambassadors of good will and exemplary conduct was expected. All facilities open to British students were open to us in the universities. Faculty members went out of their way to make us welcome, and we soon found we had many friends in and out of school. More will be said on this subject later.

London, England, March 28, 1919

Dear Folks: - I have everything set now for my work in London University. We met with the faculty yesterday, selecting our courses of study and completing our registration. My fees amount to five pounds, about $25 in our money. Incidental charges may cost another five pounds. British colleges are quite unlike our own.

Colleges here instruct almost entirely by the lecture system. You can listen if you wish, read a newspaper, talk, or even sneak out, and nothing is said. Lecturers go on the assumption that the subject matter is there and students may take it or leave it. There are no required subjects and students may pick and choose.

I will attend lectures in: The English Political System, Public Finance, Ethnology, Social and Political Problems arising from the War, and Historical Sources. Ethnology is a study of the people of Europe, and the instructor is Dr. Westermarck, a world authority on the subject. The London School of Economics has a fine library. Textbooks, as we know them, are not used. A student having difficulties in understanding lectures or library readings may hire a tutor if he wishes.

We have some "typical professors with whiskers" here, well educated and able. One of my teachers has been a member of Parliament for ten years and advises that we attend sessions of that body; I will follow his advice, something I have long wanted to do.

I had planned to leave for Scotland today but am laid up with my worst cold since last winter. I purchased medicine in a pharmacist's shop (drug store) and this morning am a little better. The delay is not serious, and I shall go as soon as possible. I could think of no good reason for taking chances on making the cold worse.

Fuel is very scarce, and a miner's strike is not helping the situation. The warmest place now is in bed. There are no stoves in this hotel and no central heating system; fireplaces only and they are not fired properly. Most of our men have colds, but the weather is improving, and we are not discouraged. It all is so much better than the majority of us had it in France.

I had a fine trip through Westminster Abbey a few days ago. The Abbey is very old and steeped in history. Many of England's famous men and women are buried in the Abbey, statesmen, writers, kings, queens, dukes, princes, philosophers, soldiers, etc. Poets' Corner contains graves of famous writers and many memorial tablets to others not buried there, including one to the memory of the American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Edward the Confessor, king of England before 1066 A.D. is buried in an abbey tomb, and this fact gives us some notion concerning the age of the place. Additions have been made but not many. We think we have old houses and buildings at home; but they are new when compared with ones I have recently seen. St. Paul's Cathedral, built about 1675, is considered comparatively new. I am planning to attend worship services in both St. Paul's and Westminster soon. The royal chapel in Westminster Abbey has a wonderfully decorated ceiling, all of stone, but looking like plaster of paris or carved wood. Decorations inside St. Paul's are beyond adequate description and must be seen to be appreciated.

The old coronation chair in the Abbey is an interesting relic. It was brought from Scotland by Edward I in 1370 and has under it a piece of rock known

as the "Stone of Scone." Ruling monarchs have been crowned in England, seated in this chair, ever since. It was used in Scotland for the same purpose, and legend says it was previously used in Ireland. According to legend, the stone was one used by Jacob as a pillow when he saw angels descending. The chair, the stone, and the coronation ceremony itself, are traditional and very dear to the hearts of loyal subjects of the king and queen.

The kingship itself is traditional. The king has very little real power, the actual rulers being the prime minister and cabinet who govern in the king's name. And the ministers themselves come from the majority party in Parliament. The residence of the Prime Minister, Mr. David Lloyd George, is a very plain brick house at 10 Downing Street. The house looks much like the building in Fredericktown housing Clark Brothers store. I will send you a picture of the house soon. Buckingham Palace, the king's residence, has nothing on the White House in Washington, except in size. The British like plain buildings of stone and brick. There is no central capitol and government buildings are widely scattered and undistinguished in appearance. The Parliament Building is the best appearing of the lot and well located near Westminster Abbey.

London shows the mark of gradual growth through the many centuries of its existence, the first settlements dating back to Roman times B.C. Many streets are crooked, narrow, and overcrowded. The same street often has two or three names in the space of a couple of miles. I am staying in Southampton Row, but before I reach Aldwych I am on Kingsway and have been going straight ahead.

There are many great art galleries and museums in London, and I have visited one, The National Art Gallery. It contains hundreds of the world's best pictures; the original painting of "The Gleaners" is one of them. I will go back for further study and observation and visit other galleries and museums as time permits.

While I was having my dinner a few days ago, a thief entered my room and

stole my camera and collection of souvenirs I had brought from France. The place is infested with thieves and several of our men have been robbed. I got off easy in comparison with some of the others. I bought another camera, but the souvenirs cannot be replaced. I had all my baggage in the check room, or I would have lost more. I had been carrying the camera and souvenirs with me in a haversack to guard against stealing and neglected to take them with me to the dining room. I am moving out of this place as soon as I can find a private lodging house. Some of the fellows are taking turns watching, and sooner or later we will catch us a thief. The principal offenders are penniless soldiers who are absent from their commands without leave.

One British soldier lost all his baggage; another his shoes, etc. The papers carry news articles concerning thefts in hotels and lodgings frequented by soldiers, and the police are coming up with many thieves in custody. Many are the threats made by victims in this hotel, and it will go hard with the miscreants if caught in the act.

What is happening around home now? I have had no mail for six weeks now, and I am writing Company N again concerning mail transfer. Mail should be coming soon directly here from the States. The address you have holds good until further notice. Hope you are all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Shortly after this letter was written one thief came to grief. Two of our "watchmen" caught a fugitive Canadian soldier redhanded. They saw the man enter a room and when he came out loaded with the occupant's property, they seized him. The thief was an expert wrestler and managed to wriggle out of the arms of his captors, dropping the loot as he did so. One of our boys caught up with him at the head of the stairs and dealt him a stunning blow that sent him headlong down a flight of steps and onto his head at the bottom. One of the captors sat on

the stunned victim while the other summoned the police who arrested the thief and took him to jail. We read in the paper the next day that the police turned the man over to Canadian army authorities, who identified him as a man long missing and against whom a long series of crimes was charged. The incident stirred up much excitement and brought to the captors thanks from both management and police. The affair seemed to have a salutary effect since there were no more robberies during the remainder of my stay in the hotel.

London, England, April 2, 1919

Dear Brother: - I have just received my first mail from home in six weeks. In the packet forwarded from Company N there were three letters from Mother and Dad, two from Aunt Libby, and one from Earl Welker. All were dated in February except one of the two from Aunt Libby, which was dated March 1. Other letters are on the way since I know the family writes each week. They will come drifting in soon I hope.

I am very sorry to learn of Mrs. Moree's death, and I am writing a letter of sympathy to the family. The old neighborhood has changed much since I left it almost a year ago. "Flu" has taken a terrible toll in life all over the world and resembles in effects the plagues that swept Asia and Europe in the Middle Ages.

I am happy to know that the things I sent from Nimes arrived safely and in good condition. The box containing sea shells was not very strong, and I wondered about it. The packages may have been censored at a base port. My camera and collection of souvenirs were stolen recently while I was eating dinner. A few of the souvenirs were earmarked for you, and I will endeavor to come up with something else. My last letter carried details of the theft. I did not mail this collection home on account of censorship, some of the things then being

forbidden to the mails. We are taking turns watching rooms now and hope to come up with the thief.

I have been keeping indoors most of the time recovering from a severe cold. I am much better now and will soon be going again. I had to postpone my trip to Scotland on account of the cold and also the time we sign the payroll is coming up. I will have plenty of time between April 16 and 28 for the journey, and the weather will be better. It has been bad here most of the time, and today the city is enveloped in a fog so thick that we cannot see across the street. Fogs here are the real thing; they last for days sometimes.

Friday there is a memorial service to American dead in Westminster Abbey, and I have an admission ticket. I have seen the king, queen, and prince of Wales. You may have read about the king's guards marching through London. The king reviewed the guards marching in front of Buckingham Palace, and we saw him standing in the reviewing box with the queen. The prince marched with the guards.

I hear you have to go to Newark now. Better get married and cut down traveling expenses. I hope there is enough left of the old Interstate for me to go a few miles when I get home. And how does the old boat run now after four years? Many of the home boys must be out of service by this time. Watch the stories they pass round; some of them grow as time and distance fade.

By the time this letter reaches home, you will be plowing and preparing to plant corn. If everything goes well, I should be home about the time tassels appear on the corn. Perhaps peace will be signed before long. Peacemaking seems to be a long and drawn-out job. I can't express my opinions on account of censorship, but I can say that I do not agree with all that is being done.

Must close now and get out a few answers to other letters waiting. Love to all,

Gilbert.

I have edited out of this letter repetitions of matters discussed in the one immediately preceding. The "slacker element" received a jolt of sarcasm and I eliminated all remarks pertaining to those benighted souls.

The fog mentioned in the opinions of Londoners was a light one. It lasted about forty-eight hours. A couple of weeks later another fog descended on the city and lasted most of four days and nights. We were warned to stay off the streets during two of the days, and we did. The fog descends, damp and chilly, and mixed with it is coal smoke from the thousands of coal-burning fires in the city. It was interesting and sometimes amusing to hear people talk about being long in the "smog."

London, England, April 5, 1919

Note - This letter is the only one I wrote to which the censor took exceptions. I am copying the letter in the form it had when it arrived at its destination. I am noting the places where contents were removed, and I do not remember at all what I said that was offensive; possibly a sarcastic remark concerning our mail service which continued to be very unsatisfactory.

Dear Folks: - I have just returned from the American University Union Hdq. with a keen feeling of disappointment. There is something wrong with our mail service. To date, I have had only two letters from you and two from Aunt Libby that came---

CENSORED

I wrote President McGilvrey for my college credentials a long time ago and they have failed to arrive. Dr. McGilvrey always attends to such matters promptly and I am sure is not to blame. Credentials were not demanded for registration and fortunately for me. Tell Aunt Libby that I do not agree with her at all respecting the mail service.

I am still partially laid up with my cold and bronchitis but am improving.

I was able to attend the Memorial for American dead at Westminster Abbey yesterday and took a breath of fresh air this -------

Censored. This paragraph was on the opposite side of the other elimination. I do not know which side offended; most probably the first.

The Abbey was crowded with English civilians and soldiers, American soldiers, and many others. I have a copy of the service and will send it home. The American ambassador, members of the British cabinet, and other dignitaries were present. The service was dignified and impressive, carried out as it was in the historic old abbey amid the graves of England's foremost men. I knew I was present at an historic occasion, and I am happy that I was there.

We signed the payroll yesterday and will soon be paid for March. The rate of exchange is down and we will be the gainers by being paid in local currency, about two dollars net profit for me.

I am enclosing pictures made with my new camera. The weather has not been good for picture making, but I have secured a few and a roll of film is now being processed. I spoiled one roll by inadvertently exposing it to light. I will be here a long time, and I am sure weather conditions will improve. My trip to Scotland and Ireland should be productive of many shots.

Stars and Stripes announced recently that the 42nd Division is to go home this month, and the 4th is to remain in the Army of Occupation in Germany. It looks like a long time for Earl. Keller is in the 42nd and should be home in time to pick up a good job. Time is passing rapidly here, and June 30 will soon be at hand, none too soon for me.

I am relieved to know that the spoons arrived in good shape and am glad you like them. I am picking up some good picture cards here and will send them along presently. If you think of anything you would like to have from London,

please let me know and I will send it, providing the censorship permits,

Love to all,

Gilbert.

American soldiers who spent any time at all in London received a cordial welcome in the "Eagle Hut" constructed and operated by the Y.M.C.A. Located at the intersection of Kingsway and the Strand known as Aldwych, the hut offered sleeping accommodations, food, writing and resting facilities, and unofficial headquarters for visiting soldiers. Our student detachment soon made the hut our headquarters for resting, eating, and tour planning. British families wishing to entertain our men sent invitations to the hut. Theaters made a general practice of sending down blocks of free tickets to shows, usually matinee performances. Visiting dignitaries were invited to the hut to speak to us in the spacious auditorium, and we often were able to meet them personally. Candy, tobacco, razor blades, soap, toothpaste, and sundry other items for personal use were available at rock-bottom prices in the hut. Skilled personnel were in charge, both British and American. I became well acquainted with the managing group and sometimes assisted in an unofficial capacity in conducting London tours. Regardless of criticisms made by others of the "Y," I never had a valid objection to make concerning my own relation with it. The Eagle Hut was my second home in London.

London, England, April 10, 1919

Dear Folks: - Mail came in this morning and included your letter of March 5. I am happy to be again in direct communication with you. Receiving letters several weeks old gives me a lift even so. Mail forwarded from France should be here soon. Again I hope for an early end of mail difficulties.

I know you were disappointed at not hearing when I was to leave Abainville. The army kept us in the dark always, even when the war had ended. Reports that

often seemed authoritive would come out and then - nothing happened. One that really inspired and gained confidence in us was to the effect that we would leave on February 15. On that day we worked as usual. We came to the point of discounting all reports.

My regiment and company are still in France with as poor prospects of leaving as of two months ago. The 15th Engineers, fifteen months in France, left Abainville early in January for the coast and are still waiting. I have my own opinions about these strange moves but prefer to keep still until I get home. You might form some conclusions of your own by reading articles in the Saturday Evening Post editions of March 8 and 15.

There will be a showdown when our fellows get home, and some of them get into politics. Some of the "old war-horses" in politics will lose out when A.E.F. veterans begin voting as they feel now.

I am sorry to learn of Joe Cocanour's death. I saw his name on a published casualty list. I remember seeing Howard Barton's name on a list as having been wounded. Is he home yet? Frank Thornburg and Don Marple are fortunate indeed to be out of service so soon.

Will Frank try a comeback in Fredericktown schools? Personally I think he would be foolish to think of it. He was never paid half enough and always overworked to no particular purpose. I will come back a bit on the independent side, look diligently for a good school position, and when one is found, work hard at it, standing always by principles of morals and conduct in which I believe. I do not believe in keeping people on payrolls simply as ornaments.

The war has done much for the majority of our men, and they will return with pride to a country untouched by enemy fire and independent enough to make their influence felt. To really appreciate his country, one should live in a foreign nation for a while and get to know people, customs, traditions, etc.

I have a great deal of respect for England as a great nation yet I cannot see why they depend so much on the old class system as they do. Here a man is born to rule, to trade, or to work with his hands. With all due respect, I would not trade places with any I have met so far. I am studying English political systems, and I will be better able to make comparisons intelligently. An important gap in my education is being filled by living here and studying in London University.

I would like to be home for the July 4 celebration but of course will not be. Take it all in and tell me about it later. I am sending home more pictures and film. Please have prints made from the film; they do such poor work here.

I have recovered from my cold and leave on my trip as soon as the payroll business is settled. It is all tied up in red tape, enough to make a saint swear. If soldiers become profane, they have good reasons in the army.

You should be having good weather now. It is raining here now and has been for two days. Damp, foggy, and generally disagreeable, but we have hopes. "O what is so rare as a day in June, then if ever, come perfect days." (in Ohio, yes) Love to all,

Gilbert.

British army units were being demobilized and men returned to civilian status in large numbers. We constantly encountered men just out of uniform; many were having difficulty finding employment. War industries were closing too, and jobs were scarce. The British "Tommy," happy to be out of the army, talked about being "demobbed," his way of referring to army "discharge" as we would say. I became well acquainted with several British veterans, who were students in my classes; fine fellows, all of them. Unemployment was becoming a serious problem in England, and the government finally resorted to the "dole" as a temporary measure. The "dole" was a small weekly payment made from the

treasury to unemployed men unable to get into regular work. The country was also faced with the support and care of thousands of veterans incapacitated by war injuries as well as the dependents of men killed in action. More than 900,000 British soldiers were killed in the war. The net result was a staggering financial, economic, and social problem, or rather a whole series of problems facing the Lloyd George Cabinet and Parliament as aftermath of four years of fighting. I began a series of visits to the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons where I heard many debates on issues of the day.

Edinburgh, Scotland, April 17, 1919

Dear Folks: - Since last writing to you I have moved again, this time to the old Scottish capital. I left Glasgow yesterday morning and stopped in Stirling, one of the famous old cities of Scotland.

Stirling has always been known as the entrance to the Highlands and is located on a high hill overlooking the Forth River. The side next to the river is a steep cliff of rock, a strong defense, on top of which the castle is perched. The castle played a very important role during tribal wars among the Scots and later in conflicts between Scotland and England. Mary Queen of Scots lived there for a time and her son, James VI, king of Scotland, inheriting the throne of England, joined the two kingdoms under one government.

The castle is constructed of solid masonry and has thick walls. Outside the walls is a moat that formerly was filled with water crossed only by a drawbridge. The walls still show signs of battle where shots fired by General Monk's army in 1651 took effect. The place is very interesting with its dungeons, secret passages, etc. The day was the first bright one I had seen in Scotland, and I secured several snapshots. The view from the castle walls is one of the finest in Scotland, and one can see the famous battlefield of Bannockburn two miles away. The Trossachs mountains may be seen at a distance; the scenery is

very beautiful.

This morning we visited Edinburgh Castle, famous in history and similar in construction to Stirling. We also visited St. Giles Cathedral, famous as the church of the Reformer John Knox who brought Presbyterianism to Scotland. This afternoon we visited Holyrood Palace where the old monarchs of Scotland lived, the last being Mary Queen of Scots. As a palace, Holyrood does not compare with Windsor or Buckingham, but is interesting and historic. The old chapel is in ruins, but the gardens are kept up and are beautiful.

We visited several other places of lesser importance including the home of John Knox, now a museum. The weather turned bad again today, and I could not get any snapshots. One dour old Scot told me that in Scotland they have nine months of winter and three months of bad weather. How right he seems to be!

Tuesday I had a fine trip to Loch Lomond, a lake famous in song and story. I rode on a steamer the length of the Loch, twenty-three miles, and returned by train. I am sending cards to you that I picked up along the way. This letter is only an outline of my wanderings and I will fill in detail when I get home.

I have recovered entirely from my cold and am feeling fine. The air in Scotland seems much better and purer than in London. I have sent you a number of cards and hope they reach you promptly. Yes, I spent Easter Sunday in Edinburgh. Hope you are all well. Love to all,

Gilbert.

I traveled from London to Glasgow on one of England's best trains, making the journey entirely by daylight. The weather for a change was sunny, and I enjoyed the scenery no end while traveling through the countryside. The rolling hills were beautiful with the greenery of spring, and many flocks of sheep were grazing in the fields and kept within bounds by stone fences. The train made

few stops but did slow down passing through quaint small villages of thatched-roof cottages. An elderly Scottish couple occupied the train compartment with me, and we engaged in an interesting and informative conversation. Well acquainted with the route of travel, the gentleman pointed out places of interest and gave me a lesson in history I have never forgotten. With pride my new friend pointed out the exact location of the famous "border" when we crossed it.

At one time during the day a flashily dressed man came into the compartment and invited me to play cards with him, displaying at the same time a roll of bills. I politely declined and the elderly lady, silent up to that time spoke up: "Aye," she said, "and that mon be a gambler; ye are smart lad to beware of him." I agreed with the lady and thanked her for her interest in my welfare. She lapsed into silence again and spoke only once more when we parted at the Glasgow station. "Aye, aye, lad, Scotland is a bonny country; ye do well to enjoy it when y'r young."

While traveling between Glasgow and Edinburgh, I made a side trip to Ayr and the Robert Burns country. I wrote a description of this visit to someone in the family, but the letter was not in the collection. I remember how much I enjoyed my time in Ayr and my visit to the Burns cottage and the scene of Tam O'Shanter's ride. I made a few snapshots and one of them, enlarged, hangs on our living-room wall. An old Scotswoman prepared lunch for me, one item of which I have fond remembrance, a large potato, baked and mealy, and graced with the first butter I had seen for a long time. What else was served I have long since forgotten.

With the "Y" furnishing baseball equipment, we played a few innings on the cricket green in Edinburgh on Easter afternoon. The young fry persisted in getting too close but did prove their worth by chasing foul balls for us. By the time the game was half over, we had a large audience. The net results for

us were sore muscles, but we did have a lot of fun trying to explain the game to a few curious Scotsmen.

London, England, April 22, 1919

Dear Folks: - I have returned from my tour and am again in the big city. I am moving today into a private rooming house. While I was away, one of my friends learned that a room was to be vacated at once and engaged it for me. It was a stroke of luck for me since rooms are scarce and in great demand.

I had a fine time in Edinburgh and spent two days there. There is a fine "Y" in Edinburgh, St. Andrews Hut, and there I stayed during my sojourn in the city. The weather was threatening but no rain actually fell. On our last day we had a baseball game and I came out of it stiff and sore. I hope I can return to Scotland later in the season.

Leaving Edinburgh, I returned to Glasgow and caught a train to Ardrossan on the west coast. The boat was waiting, and what a boat it was! As I was too late to get a cabin, I had to ride in the steerage. Most of the regular boats are still in the transport service, and this one was a cargo vessel. The steerage was part of the cargo space with only boxes and the floor to sit on. The voyage lasted seven hours, and we landed in Belfast early in the morning.

Belfast is not a true Irish city, rather is it Scotch-Irish, and is the greatest linen manufacturing center in the world. I did not spend much time in Belfast but went on to Dublin by train. Dublin is the capital and a true Irish city. Ireland is, as you know, in a troubled condition, and I could plainly see that something was wrong. The city is dirty, beggars are everywhere, and the populace regards all soldiers as enemies. British soldiers were on guard everywhere, and outbreaks are common.

The principal way of getting about in Dublin is by jaunting car, a little two-wheeled vehicle with a seat on each side and one in the middle for the

driver. If he has one passenger, the driver sits opposite; if two he sits in the middle. I hired a jehu to show me about, and he did so satisfactorily. Dublin is far below the cities of Great Britain in appearance and wealth. The best part of the city is Phoenix Park, ten miles in circumference and with hundreds of deer grazing. The sun peeped out, and I was able to get a few snaps. I bought picture cards and will send them home.

The Irish countryside is very beautiful with green fields and little stone cottages freshly whitewashed. I can now understand the Irishman's love of green.

I left Dublin in the evening, this time traveling in a cabin of a real passenger boat, landing at Holyhead about midnight. A train was waiting, and next morning I was back in London. I had intended going on to Cork and other places, but the weather and the possibility of stopping a stray revolutionist rifle bullet caused us to change plans. The war is over now, and I do not care to get in any mixups. I'll go back later. Love to all,

Gilbert.

My tour of Ireland was summarily closed down by activity on the part of the Irish revolutionists. The letter I wrote tells only a part of the story. Censorship forbade writing details of England's internal affairs. When we came to Dublin we found a general strike in progress. During the night fighting broke out not far from our hotel, and next morning prisoners were marched through the streets on their way to prison. President Wilson in Paris had refused to defend the Irish Republicans in their efforts to win independence from Great Britain; as a result all Americans were objects of hostility. We were advised to forget about going to Cork and to stay inside until time for the boat. The streets were heavily guarded, and an escort saw us off.

Many Irish leaders were in jail, and one of them, Eamon DeValera now

nearly ninety years of age, is still president of the Irish Republic. DeValera was in a London jail while we were in school and narrowly escaped hanging. Several leaders were executed as had been Sir Roger Casement in 1916 for conspiring with the Germans. There were many Irish sympathizers in London and I talked with several of them. In fact, I heard a great deal from both sides. Irish independence had been a "hot" subject in Parliament for a century or more. Pickets outside DeValera's jail were a common sight, and I saw them many times.

London, England, April 24, 1919

Dear Folks: - Under separate cover I am sending two envelopes of booklets, cards, etc., that I have picked up in England. Things get lost so easily that I think it best to send home what I have on hand. Most of the things I brought from France were in my haversack and, as I have told you, departed for parts unknown.

Since last writing I have moved and am pleasantly located in a private rooming house, not far from the college. I was glad to get away from the "Cosmo." They caught another second-story artist (thief) at the hotel yesterday. I am rooming with a young man (Edward Rinde) from the tank corps; he is also a student in the School of Economics. We have good meals and occupy a nice large room.

It has been raining today, but now at 7:00 p.m. the sun is making feeble efforts to shine before setting. I received several letters Tuesday when I went to the Union for my mail. President McGilvrey and Prof. Olson both wrote to me, the last named referring me to a couple of positions: one in Shaker Heights near Cleveland, and the other in Bowling Green State Normal. I am writing to both for particulars.

Since writing the paragraph above, I have had supper, or dinner they call it here, consisting of boiled ham, potatoes, carrots, greens, soup, bread, apple

tart, and coffee. My partner has gone out for the evening, and I am staying in to write and read. Last night I went to a theater to see Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. I enjoyed the play, having read and studied it in school.

Sylvester's letter finally came; and it was the second he had written since getting my address, the first being lost enroute. I wrote him at once after hearing of his inquiry to you; it was upon receipt of this letter that he wrote the second letter. Sylvester is teaching again following discharge from the army. He was not sent overseas. My old friend Harold Rex, who was in France, has been discharged and is now back in school in Kent. Harold tells me that one of our friends, Earnest Gault, has been missing since September 18, probably killed and not identified. Lieutenant Morgan, a Kent graduate, was killed in action last October. Harold will stay in school long enough to get his degree.

Has Grandpa Foote really purchased an automobile, or was the clipping a joke? If he has done so, I fear bad results will follow. How is our old bus running? Is Wilber still keeping the weeds from growing in that lane leading down to the house by the old Leedy fishpond?

Sam wrote to me and says he hopes I will come home the same "Uncle Dudley" who left last May. He need not worry, nor anyone else; just tell him that my cap size has not changed. Sam tells me that he is still working for Tennyson Swank. Who keeps house for Tennyson and Cassius since the death of their wives?

How are things going for the Parishes? I often think of them and others. Strange what one will think of after a year's absence. Yes, it will be a year on May 27 since I entered the service in Camp Sherman. So much has happened since.

Most of the 160 who entered with me probably pulled through O.K. One of them became a sergeant major, Freeman Tudor by name. Sergeant major is the top non-commissioned rank in the army. There are two grades of sergeant major, battalion

and regimental.

Wilber Foote tells me that he is acting as first sergeant again. That is no snap job. The "Top kick" gets damned both ways by officers and men. Has Frank Thornburg reached home yet? Harry Randall of the 42nd Division boys should be home by the time this letter reaches you. The French give the 42nd a great deal of praise. The boys are going home rapidly now. I have heard nothing lately about my old Company N, but I do hope they are on their way somewhere. If you read in the Mount Vernon paper about Troy Harris, Lanti Householder, or Charles Cervenka, being home you will know that Company N has made it. The four of us made up Knox County's contingent in Company N. It is difficult to figure out when Earl will get home.

The situation in Paris is very tense now. I agree with President Wilson's stand on the Italian question. How do people at home feel about it? I understand there is much German propaganda being spread in the States playing down German atrocities and bidding for sympathy toward the defeated Central Powers. I have talked with British soldiers who spent time in German prisoner-of-war camps and their accounts are grim and dreadful. Those reports about the Germans treating our occupation soldiers so well is propaganda pure and simple. The Germans are doing so, not because they like us so well, but to arouse sympathy for their plight in defeat. People at home, who did not get over here now that the war is over, are ready to forget and forgive. All bunk --- Germany is still dangerous and the allies must stick together.

Mistakes have been made and abuses tolerated in our army it is true; and much has been done that should not have been done. All these things should be threshed out in the United States and not be allowed to change our policy toward Germany in the least.

I suppose there are a lot of presidential booms on wing now. I have revised

my list of candidates and eliminated Senator Lodge who foolishly has recently attempted to embarrass President Wilson. The Lodge resolution did more harm here than most people at home think. A quick peace cannot be had by such means. Whether or not a man agrees with the president in politics, he should at least be careful. Senator Harding is still my first choice in so far as I can see now.

There is much difference between the view of things one gets here and the view you get at home. I do not agree with many things being done in Paris; but, since they are settling the thing, I simply hope for the best. As to what is going on in the States, I am not well informed. I am watching with much interest the progress of things in England just now. They have many problems: a far greater war debt than ours, more crippled soldiers, more pensions, etc. There seems to be a strong movement to nationalize the coal mines, and the Labor Party is backing it. The Labor Party is strong and growing stronger every day. Many people here think Lloyd George will not last long in power after peace is made.

I am glad to be here and in position to get much valuable information at first hand. One of my teachers, Lee-Smith, is a member of the Labor Party. Administrations in most countries will change when peace is made, and I think our own country is due for a Republican President and Congress.

Many things will be brought to light in a campaign. When you read about these things, try to decide for yourselves which are for the good of the country and which are merely political fodder. It will be difficult, I admit, to differentiate intelligently. Must close for this time. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

As I look back now over the years, I can see how mistaken I was regarding Senator Harding and a few other politicians, but time has proved me right concerning a dangerous Germany. The Labor Party won a majority in Parliament shortly after the war and proceeded to nationalize not only the coal industry

but many others. Party changes took place in practically all warring countries including our own when the Republicans won out in 1920. The Allies split after peace was signed and allowed a resurgent Germany under Hitler to bring on another and worse war than the one in which the 21st Engineers participated. Almost alone, a prophet of things political stood in the House of Commons and constantly called the turn of coming events. The prophet was none other than Winston Churchill. Unfortunately for us in our own country the return to "normalcy" captured major attention and we chased dollars, forgetting our responsibilities in maintaining the peace. Defeat of the League of Nations in the United States was our biggest mistake of the century. I am happy to say now that I was an advocate of the League.

London, England, April 30, 1919

Dear Folks: - The mailman has been very good to me lately, bringing letters from you, Aunt Libby, Edith, Earl Welker, and Wilber Foote. The twenty-sixth roll of papers also came. The papers were filled with interesting information that I was happy to have. The pictures are good, and I recognized the place where they were made in the big pasture field and near the frog pond. Wilber is becoming a good photographer. He probably used my folding camera; it is a better one than I have here. I am unable to do much with pictures, due to so many cloudy and dark conditions.

Last Sunday we had a hard snowstorm, and yesterday there was more snow. It looked more like spring when I was in Scotland than it does now. People say that this is an unusual spring, but I am taking that with a grain of salt.

Last week 68,000 men sailed for home, most of them by way of Brest. Are you still hearing about Brest? I have had dreams when I think of the two weeks we spent in Brest, and we had it better than most. The concrete floor was better than mud. It all seems like a dream now. I talked with a soldier from

Brest garrison, who was on leave here, and he said that the camp had been properly organized and made adequate to needs of soldiers coming and going.

Earl has moved; his division is now in the area formerly occupied by the 42nd. He does not say as much, but I am sure he is a bit homesick, and no wonder! Prospects for getting home are not good. The 21st Engineers are now at Le Mans building roads and barracks. Company N had not joined the regiment on April 22 when a friend wrote me from Abainville. The regimental sergeant major of the 21st is also a student in the School of Economics and keeps posted through letters from his friends. If Karl Keller had stayed with his company, he would have been home by this time.

Wilber Foote has no prospects of getting home soon. It looks as though he, Earl, and I will be late. Wilber was fortunate enough to get a leave enabling him to spend some time with Anna at Nantes. Earl has been promoted to private first class which means an increase in pay of three dollars per month.

Has Russell Smith arrived home yet? If so, you will note that he is minus his "Sam Browne" belt worn by officers overseas. The officers were really angry when an order came out banning the "S.B." belts at home stations. I also read in the papers that Dr. Morrick had moved to Cleveland after discharge.

Our university studies started Monday with a full house. Classes I have attended so far are in European History, and I soon found that the work would present me with no difficulties in particular. Previous study had prepared me well for the European points of view we get in the lectures here. Tomorrow and Friday are the days for my work in Political Science and Ethnology. Each class meets once a week for lectures, and we are expected to read in the library ad interim. No textbooks are required, but I am planning to buy a few books, valuable in my work, and available only in England.

There are several well-known men connected with the School of Economics

as lecturers who are considered outstanding authorities in their fields. Just as I finished the paragraph above, the dinner gong sounded, and I lost no time on the way to the dining room. Soup, potatoes, roast mutton, turnips, bread, and pudding, comprised the menu. We are living well nowdays. I get two meals a day here and have lunch wherever I happen to be.

I have no snapshots to send this time. Processing is so slow and poor that I may later send the undeveloped films home where work is of much better quality. That is, I will send them if regulations permit. I am mailing you a book of cartoons that appeared in Stars and Stripes from time to time since the beginning of publication. They are very good and make one think of the civil-war story of "Si Klegg."

Another big parade is due in London Saturday with troops of all British Colonies marching in review before the king. I will try for some pictures if weather and police permit. Hoping this finds you all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Londoners loved parades and the streets were lined for miles with thousands of people of all ages. I did secure a few snaps, but they were of poor quality. The weather refused stubbornly to cooperate. There was no police interference with photographers; in fact, they helped us find vantage spots. I soon came to have a high regard for the London police officers. During my stay in London I witnessed many parades including the largest of all time: the review of troops of all the allied powers. Each contingent was headed by its top commanding general, ours by General Pershing and Belgium's by its King Albert. I also saw a royal procession when the king rode in state to open Parliament, and what a show it was, nothing like it in the world! Several times a group of us went to

the railroad station to see the arrival of visiting heads of governments of friendly nations. The one best remembered was Paderewski, the great pianist, who became prime minister of the new Republic of Poland.

London, England, May 2, 1919

Dear Folks: - Your letter of April 14 came today and with it the twenty-seventh roll of papers; both welcome arrivals. I am happy to know you are well. Weather here continues rainy and damp. I am keeping well and am enjoying life in spite of the extreme dampness and chill.

I am enclosing snapshots made in Scotland. On the back of each is an explanation. Do not paste these snaps into a book as I have a plan for making up an album with pages of descriptive matter. Bad weather has prevented making many more pictures.

Perhaps Joe Cocanour's death was reported by mistake. I hope such was the case and that genial Joe will presently turn up alive. In his last letter Karl Keller told that a letter returned to his parents labeled "Dead and Buried" had caused much needless worry. Karl says he is a very lively corpse if that is how he is listed in the records. I noticed an article in the Free Press to the effect that Don Marple and Roy Martz are going into business. I hope the war has made men out of both and that they will now settle down to be successful and useful citizens. I am sure they will do so, and I hope people patronize their business. Charlie Price was badly wounded and gassed in battle; I marvel that he returned alive.

So Grandpa Foote really purchased an automobile, and both Wilber Foote and Earl have heard about it. I hope for the best but fear the worst if he insists on piloting the car himself. He is too old to run a car and I hope he hires a driver.

I am sorry to learn of teacher failure in Brick school this year. It is a natural result of an old system that keeps wages down when everything else is paying so much better. The school winds up with someone who cannot qualify in anything else. If people could only recognize progress and centralize the schools, hire a good staff of teachers which could be done by raising wages, and improve conditions generally, the whole community would be so much better off.

I would like to plan and carry out a school system in Berlin Township without being hampered by reactionary board members and fossilized superintendents. I am not aiming at Supt. Marriott, who is a total stranger to me, but am thinking of conditions as I experienced them a few years ago when teaching in the county. I appreciate your suggestion that I return to Brick school for a year. I would like to give the people a good school, but there are many other things to consider. I would lose another year on my long-range plan, the goal of which I am not yet ready to disclose. I will take my chances of landing something to my liking before turning back to a one-room rural school.

It will be much better, I am sure, for me to find a place among strangers and win a place in a new community. "The prophet is not without honor save in his own country." I cannot forget the fact that when I asked for advancement in my own county I was turned down because I belonged to the wrong political party. You are at liberty to discuss the matter with board members, and I promise to consider an offer. I am sure you understand that I have been thinking things over very carefully, and I am sure too that you see my line of reasoning. President McGilvrey and Prof. Olson are thinking about my situation, and the last named has told me about two possible openings. Here is a quote from Dr. McGilvrey's letter which speaks for itself: "We shall be very glad to see you back here when you return to the States, and I shall try to help in any way I can to get you placed where you may do the work that suits you best." Right now

getting home is most important to me. Now that the war is over, people's patriotic feelings are subsiding; but I do know that my friends will help if they can.

My old friend Harry Kane, who teaches in Cuyahoga Falls six miles from Kent, is saying a word there for me. As an opener to negotiations you may say to the board that I cannot consider a salary of less than $100 per month and that the buildings must be made fit to be lived in, clean and sanitary. If I decide to accept an offer, I promise to do my best for all concerned. I would enjoy being home for a year again. You will remember that my last sojourn at home was the 1915-16 year when I taught school in the Palmyra district.

I attended eight lectures this week and enjoyed and profited by so doing. Prof. Lees-Smith, a former member of Parliament, lectured on "The League of Nations" and will continue on the subject from week to week. When he finishes, I will write an abstract from my notes and send it to you. Lees-Smith is an authority on the subject and fully capable of discussing it. Today I heard a lecture on the British civil-service system, both interesting and instructive. I spent three hours in the library too, thus making a good day of it.

As soon as I collect my ration and quarters commutations, I will resume my travels over week ends and holidays. So far I have collected one month's pay, and more will soon be forthcoming. I can go to Wales or many other places easily over a week end. Hope you are all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

London, England, May 7, 1919

Dear Folks: - I have just finished reading the twenty-eighth roll of papers with much interest. I note that Battery E is home at last. This company came through in good shape, not having lost a man in action. Men will be coming home now in

increasing numbers with Earl, Wilber, and me bringing up the rear.

I am enclosing a picture that may be of interest to you. It was printed in a British paper. People over here have a great deal of admiration for Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, and his books are widely read. How I wish that picture might be repeated in real life on March 4, 1921!

I note also in the Republican News that the Cox regime is more expensive than ever and that the governor is vetoing bills right and left. The same old story, "dry" Democrats electing a "wet" governor. I cannot understand why the people of Ohio gave Cox a third term.

This morning Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels addressed us at the Eagle Hut and gave us a good speech, right to the point and brief. Daniels received much criticism early in the war when he abolished liquor in the navy. He has since then put the navy in such good shape that he does not get or merit the amount of criticism that Secretary of War Baker receives. Daniels does not talk much and as a result is not always understood.

General Pershing and a detachment of American veterans are due here May 24 to parade before the king; they will receive a hearty and much deserved welcome. This demonstration will go a long way in dispelling the work of German propaganda found everywhere seeking to discredit us and divide the allies, especially England and the United States. General Foch is coming to London soon, and before long I will have seen all the famous allied chiefs.

While I am writing this letter, peace terms are being handed to the Germans, and the greatest conference in history will have been inaugurated. I am anxious to see the morning papers in which the peace terms are published. I will send papers to you in order that you may get British editorial comment. Continental nations, Belgium, Italy, Poland, etc., will be disappointed. Delegates took enough time in Paris to make a dozen treaties; delay itself was a major source

of disappointment.

I am going over to Parliament tomorrow to listen to members discuss the terms. The newspapers will reap a big harvest supplying the public with the text of the treaty. Lecturers, teachers, preachers, legislators, and soap-box orators all will now have plenty of subject matter.

I have discussed the peace situation with Englishmen, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Frenchmen, and Italians; it is interesting to compare their opinions and views. Nearly all favor a League of Nations but differ in interpreting its functions. I am glad I am over here at this time and in England instead of France. This is a wonderful and historic time in which we are living, and I am sure we do not realize its importance and meaning in all countries.

Politics, education, literature, religion, philosophy, and, in fact, every manifestation of human activity will be influenced more or less by the war and its aftermath. The "Peace of Versailles" will stand out boldly for all time to come. Nations have been made and unmade; kings, dethroned and old systems, swept away; but the greatest drawback of all lies in the fact that people do not, or cannot understand what is happening.

It seems to me that education will be called upon to prepare and fit people for new conditions as never before. Ignorance has ever been the world's worst curse and best ally of absolutism in government. To be powerful, a monarch must needs keep his people in ignorance or direct their education along lines favorable to him as was the case in Germany.

To make self government (democracy) practical, people must beeducated to a standard where they can appreciate its value, where they can think for themselves, and where they can act on their own initiative. If such does not happen, a few shrewd leaders will soon be as powerful as were the old kings and czars, and the great struggle will have been in vain.

It is difficult to realize the conditions in Continental countries where people for centuries have been led by men born to rule. The people are as children, and it will require many years of training before they develop ability to think and act.

In our own country we have appalling examples of ignorance. Now multiply such many times and take away our security, freedom and comfort, and you approach conditions existing in most liberated countries now. In the light of this reasoning I think you can understand why people commit excesses as they are doing in Russia. Intoxicated with the departure of the old system and a sense of newly found freedom they do not understand, the people fall easy victims to the wiles of such demagogues as Lenin and Trotzky.

There are dark days ahead of the liberated peoples and there will be revolutions, counter-revolutions, and wars, until the first thrill of freedom passes and people are enlightened to the point where they can see the real reasons for acting sanely and building up rather than tearing down.

Must close and prepare for tomorrow. Hope you are all well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

When I penned this letter forty-eight years ago, I did not realize the full import of what I was saying. I was speaking as a student of history and as an observer of a panorama of history passing before me. I wrote too from the idealism of youth not yet tinged with the cynicism that often comes with age. I must admit that my thoughts as expressed in this letter savored of the prophetic. In spite of all that has happened since May 7, 1919, I am still hopeful that a golden age lies ahead "When common sense will hold fretful realms in awe." Men and nations have yet to learn that the paths of glory lead but to the grave. We pay lip service to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but in practice we border on stark

paganism. We worship God on one hand and deny Him on the other. Yet "Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

About the time I wrote this letter I became acquainted with a great teacher, Prof. Halford McKinder, England's best authority on world geography and geographic influences on history. Dr. McKinder was a member of the faculty of the School of Economics, and I attended his lectures. He served as a consultant on map making for the peace conference and commuted back and forth between Paris and London. We received a great deal of information at first hand from Dr. McKinder, and on one occasion he gave us a preview of his forthcoming book, "Democratic Ideals and Realities," finally published in 1921 in this country by Henry Holt & Co. I wrote Dr. McKinder a congratulatory note after reading the book and received a gracious reply. He lived beyond his ninetieth year and died only a few years ago. For his services to country and education Dr. McKinder was knighted by King George VI and given the title of "Sir." It was a great privilege to know this outstanding teacher and philosopher.

Graham Wallas was another of my teachers; he too was an authority in the fields of economics and political science. Prof. Wallas had served as an exchange professor at Harvard and was well acquainted with the American scene. After returning from England, I had a bit of correspondence with Dr. Wallas in connection with a book he published after the war. We often encountered our teachers in the tearoom at the school and over the cups had interesting conversations.

London, England, May 11, 1919

Dear Mother: - This is Mother's Day in the A.E.F., and so this is special to you. I hope this finds you well and enjoying the springtime. I am well and feeling fine. The weather has been good for a week, something very unusual for London. I had planned taking a weekend trip but postponed it until next week when our

pay failed to come through.

My last letter from home came Friday and was only fourteen days on the way. Civilian mail travels much faster than army mail, and mine now comes through civilian post. I am sorry to learn of Paul's accident and hope for a speedy recovery. I did not know Grandma Foote had been ill. Perhaps warmer weather will help her.

How many tractors has Paul sold to date? Tractors should sell well, and I am glad Dad bought one. It will speed up work, especially the plowing. People have only one life to live, so why not make that one a bit easier. To be progressive, one must keep abreast of the times, and farming is surely progressing.

One of the things holding back the countries over here is unwillingness to adopt new and labor-saving devices. Wilber will be in the height of glory steering that tractor over the fields. I would like pictures of him in action.

I secured some good snaps of a German tank and a German airplane this week; both were captures in the last big drive of the war. I will send prints as soon as developed, and that takes about two weeks.

I visited London Tower again yesterday; one can spend hours there. I tried to take my camera in, but the guard would not permit me to do so, and I checked it outside. The place is still listed as a garrison, and photographing military installations is forbidden. I think the real reason is that of selling pictures post cards; no competition is desired. I made a few snaps outside and at a distance.

I mailed home papers telling about the peace conference, and to George Gregg I sent a copy of Stars and Stripes. S and S will soon cease publication with so many of our men being now at home or on the way. We are getting out a student paper, and I will send you a copy when published.

I hear frequently from Karl Keller. He is in Montpelier University studying French; he did not know a word of French when he went there. We are planning a reunion to be held after our return. I may meet him in St. Aignan Casual Camp if we go home via that place and Brest. Casuals are being sent home rapidly now, and we anticipate no delay when our turns come. Being away from our companies we are known as "Casuals."

Two weeks of school have passed by rapidly. We have excellent teachers, some a bit peculiar perhaps, but able and friendly. One of my teachers, Prof. Graham Wallas, taught at Harvard four years as an exchange teacher and is well acquainted with American students and customs. He has a keen sense of humor and is well liked.

Cigarette smoking is very common here among both men and women. From all reports the custom is spreading to America along with many other strictly European idiosyncrasies. Two millions of Americans living temporarily in Europe for a year or more will bring back with them many acquired habits, good or bad. I have encountered many surprising things over here in the way of custom and habits.

Harry Randall should be home by this time and Russell Smith, too. I am not surprised to learn that George Norrick is staying in the army. George has the right temperament for a good professional soldier, a "don't-give-a-damn" spirit mixed with love of adventure. Few of the rank and file care to become professional or career soldiers, and I am not one of the few. The army has been good for me and good to me, but enough is enough.

Picnic season will be in full swing when I get home, and I will enjoy a few of them. On May 27 I will have been away one year. In some ways it has been an age since I left, but in others it all seems like a short dream. I can now see looming up before me the end of the long trail that started to open last May.

Please remember me to the family and neighbors, and tell 'em I am coming. Love to all,

Gilbert

My lodging house was located in Bedford Square, which in turn led to Russell Square and from thence to Southampton Road. In traveling to the School of Economics, I followed Southampton Road to Kingsway straight ahead to Portugal Street and a left turn took me past "Old Curiosity Shop" to the school in Clare Market, only a few doors beyond. The school at that time was housed in a large old business building housing a printing establishment on its ground floor. I am informed that in recent years the school has been moved into a new and modern building in another section of the city. The Eagle Hut was only a short distance from Clare Market and nearby was the little church famous in song and story for its "Bow Street Bells." The dividing line between Westminster Borough and London proper (Old London) was close by. My sightseeing and exploring jaunts took me through many byways on both sides of the line, all interesting and fascinating.

London, England, May 16, 1919

Dear Folks: - May is half over and I am so much nearer the best place on earth - home. Time marches on rapidly, and I am enjoying work, study, sightseeing, and good company. Aunt Libby's letter came a few days ago telling me of Grandma Foote's illness, and I hope soon to hear of improvement. Warmer weather may help as it does many times.

Weather here continues good. The sun has been doing its best, and England is now getting almost twelve hours sunshine each day. It is almost 10:00 p.m. now and not yet dark.

School is going well. Last Wednesday evening I attended a social gathering in the form of a student parliament. Next week there is to be a combined

Anglo-American program.

Yesterday afternoon I went with another student out to Richmond, a beautiful residential suburb by the river. We had a grand time rowing on the Thames. We returned by steamer to Westminster Bridge, a distance of fifteen miles. Fields and meadows are beautiful but will soon be displaced or rather turned into locations for factories. We lunched in an Italian restaurant and ate several things we could not identify.

Yesterday morning the funeral of Edith Cavell, the heroic British nurse, was held in Westminster Abbey and several of us attended. I made several pictures of the procession and am mailing you a paper telling the story. The procession was led by the famous Coldstream Guards, who presented a fine appearance as they marched with arms reversed. Thousands of spectators lined the streets to pay honor to the nurse. Soldiers stood at salute as the gun carriage bearing the body passed.

Last evening fifty of our men were entertained in the home of Lady Nancy Astor, wife of Waldorf Astor, who renounced American citizenship to become an English lord. Secretary of State Lansing was honor guest. The next reception for American students is scheduled for June 12, and I am planning to attend. At each reception a number of eminent Englishmen are present and our men are introduced to them. I hope to have a decent uniform to wear to the reception. I am having a uniform made as my present outfit is ill fitting and shabby. So far, our men have not been issued new uniforms or new shoes. It is a bit unfair when one much purchase his own clothes in order to make a good appearance.

I am leaving tomorrow morning for Stratford-on-Avon and will spend the week end there. I have week-end trips planned ahead, depending on weather and other contingencies that might crop up. Stratford was the home of William Shakespeare, and nearby are historic Warwick and Kenilworth Castles.

My old friend C. F. Thomas who is teaching in Shaker Heights sent me an application blank and advised that I apply for a position in the high school. I completed the form and returned it for consideration.

I have not heard from Wilber Foote lately and hope he is on his way home. We get plenty of American magazines here, and I am sending mine to Earl and Karl. If I hear from Wilber again, I will send him magazines providing he has no immediate prospects of going home. I am glad to know Wilber and Anna were able to have a few days together in Nantes.

I have secured a fine German souvenir for Wilber Roberts, one I know he will like. I will send it home as soon as I find a suitable packing box. Tell him to remove the grease from the souvenir as soon as unpacked and to clean it with a pine stock, a soft rag, and oil. The metal is very susceptible to rust and must be well cared for. Under no circumstances is the thing to be loaded. Now guess what it is.

I hope everything I am sending gets through in good shape. I am not risking the loss of anything else by carrying with me. Papers and pictures will come in separate containers. And please do not have this letter printed in the local paper. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

The British Museum was located only a short distance from my lodgings, and I made a practice of going over there on rainy days. To make a complete and thorough study of the place would require months or years. I became acquainted with several of the curators, and they were very helpful. I spent hours in the divisions of Egyptian, Chaldean, Assyrian, Roman, and Greek history, studying and examining archeological exhibits. One of the few men who could read ancient cuneiform writing had charge of the Assyrian and Chaldean sections; he gave me a few lessons in ancient history impossible to get anywhere else.

I had read about Egyptian mummies but had never seen one. The museum had on display a host of mummies as well as thousands of artifacts of various kinds.

A prize possession of the museum is the famous Rosetta Stone and another, the original Magna Charta. Time and space forbid further description.

London, England, May 20, 1919

Dear Folks: - This is the end of a perfect day. Stars are shining, and the day was lovely. To make things still better, I received my ration money this afternoon amounting to $116, the first since coming to London.

I had a splendid weekend in the Shakespeare country. I left London early Saturday morning and arrived in Leamington at noon, going by way of Rugby. The Shakespeare country is in Warwickshire and is both beautiful and scenic. The land is fairly level; shade trees line the roads; and there are many ivy-covered walls. Grass is very green and flowers are everywhere. The English are very fond of flowers, and there are many gardens of them. One is seldom away from the odor of flowers when traveling country roads.

Country residences of the gentry are picturesque, old, and surrounded by stately trees and well-kept lawns. Houses of the common people are of brick or stone and usually covered with thatch. The English countryside is very beautiful in summer.

I had my lunch in Leamington and then caught a bus for Kenilworth and the historic castle. Bus lines connect the small towns running over such roads as I have described before. Kenilworth is six miles from Leamington.

The old castle is in ruins, but one can imagine the grandeur that once existed. The day was bright, and I made snapshots of the castle. I wandered about among the ruins recalling some of the great events connected with the place. Queen Elizabeth often visited the castle, and Sir Walter Raleigh was a frequent guest. Valuable as a fort and garrison, the castle was finally

destroyed to prevent capture by possible enemies. Now sheep pasture among the ruined battlements and ivy climbs over the walls, covering them with green leaves. A tower near the gate has been restored by the present owner, Lord Clarendon, and is now used as a summer house.

Warwick is nearby, but I arrived too late in the day to be admitted to the castle. I journeyed on to Stratford-on-Avon and lodged in an old inn that was serving the public in the days of Queen Elizabeth, who occupied the throne in the years between 1558 and 1603. I was now in Shakespeare's home town and my first act was to purchase copies of his better-known plays. I still have a copy of Hamlet in my possession; the others went to friends.

My room had a low ceiling and narrow windows common to the period in which the inn was built. The old-fashioned bed was covered with a huge feather tick, and, needless to say, I slept well. I had an excellent meal of ham, fresh eggs, bread, butter, coffee, etc. The town is not large and was so quiet and peaceful that I was tempted to prolong my stay by at least a week.

Sunday morning I attended services in Holy Trinity Church, whose spire is always shown in pictures of Stratford-on-Avon. The Church of England services lasted ninety minutes. Shakespeare's tomb is in one corner of the church, and the church yard outside is most interesting with tombstones so old that many of the inscriptions have long since weathered away.

By the side of the Avon River is a beautiful little park; a launch provides an hour's ride through green meadows where cattle and sheep graze. I saw the principal Shakespeare points of interest including his home and that of his wife, Anne Hathaway.

Late in the afternoon I boarded a bus to Leamington in time to catch the London train. I met a fellow student in Stratford-on-Avon, and we spent the day together. The trip was well worthwhile, and next week end I may go to

either York or Brighton. Brighton is a summer resort on the south coast. Later I am planning a trip to Wales and the Isle of Man.

Yesterday I received letters from Aunt Libby and Grace Bateman, and a commencement invitation from Virgil and Forest. It scarcely seems possible that the boys are finishing high school. Aunt Libby spoke about one of my letters being censored. I think I know what was cut out; it will keep until I get home. Writing it again would only invite another cut.

My mail is coming through regularly now. According to the papers the 4th Division is being withdrawn from Germany, and Earl may yet be home before I arrive.

If mail for me comes from Chicago University, please hold it. I have written to the registrar for information concerning papers I filed about the time the army claimed me. Must close now. Hope you are all well. Love,

Gilbert.

Lunching in London was ever a source of delight and interest. We sampled the fare of restaurants operated by people of many nationalities and races. Tea time in England comes at four o'clock, and business comes to a standstill. Our classes were suspended for tea, and we soon came to like and respect the custom. I had never liked tea well enough to use it at home, but in England I learned at least to go along with it. The accompanying crumpets to me were tasteless and hard, but I did learn to like them. I thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship and sociability of the tea table.

London, England, May 24, 1919

Dear Folks: - Another week has passed into history, and time continues to march on. Dr. McLean, director of the American University Union, told me this morning that we will probably set sail June 30. "Probably?" I am mailing a copy of Stars and Stripes to you detailing much concerning troop movements homeward.

Threatening weather has canceled my plans for this week end, and I will explore further in London. I am planning to go to Wales and the Isle of Man soon, and I am told that both are beautiful and scenic. School is going along smoothly, and life in old London Town is really great.

We had a great experience yesterday afternoon when a group of us went for airplane rides. We were guests of the management of an airdrome out in a suburb of London, and two planes were kept busy all afternoon taking us up. Later we were served tea and entertained with music. The flight cost us a pound each and was worth it. I was up in the air about 2000 feet for fifteen minutes; it was an exhilarating experience. I wish Wilber could have been with me. Tuesday evening we go to Mrs. Astor's home for the evening. Guests of honor are the Duke of Connaught, who is the king's uncle; Rudyard Kipling, the poet; and other distinguished men and women. Lord Wolsley, a former cabinet officer, recently invited a group of us to his home for dinner. I am getting to be "some pumpkin," hobnobbing with dukes and lords. The "Yank" is pretty much of a curiosity here.

Wealthy Londoners send theater tickets to the "Y" several times a week to be distributed among the fellows who are around at the time. I went to see Romeo and Juliet recently, and the tickets put us in the best box seats in the place. People round us were dressed in evening clothes, men in swallow tails and the women in long skirts with little above the waist. We were polite and did not stare. The women looked us over through their lorgnettes and I suppose said to themselves: "more of those damned yankees." A lorgnette is a pair of glasses on a handle and you get a queer sensation when some stately dame surveys you therewith.

One elderly woman passed a box of chocolates over to us and told us we were in Lord So-andSo's box and she hoped we would enjoy the show. She seemed to think we had never been to a show before. As a matter of fact, I had seen that

same show two nights before but had occupied a much cheaper and poorer seat and less conspicuous too.

We were issued summer underclothing and fine new raincoats yesterday. We are to keep the coats when discharged. I haven't sent the German gun to Wilber but will do so when I find a suitable box. I have sent pictures that should reach you soon, and yesterday I sent Sam a copy of a newspaper published here. The morning papers tell us that censorship will be lifted and cease June 1. In my way of thinking, it should have ceased long ago.

Spring plowing and planting should be over by this time in Ohio. I hope to be with you in time for roasting ears and late harvest. I am hoping to be home by July 20. It will be one year ago tomorrow since I took the oath of allegiance and was sworn into the service. In some ways it seems but yesterday when we rode to Mount Vernon in the automobile and I marched to the train amid the great throng assembled to see us off; but when I think of all that has happened since that day, it seems much longer. I am well, hale, and hearty. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Exploring the nooks and byways of London was ever interesting and fascinating. Bedford Square was approximately two miles from Trafalgar Square and Pall Mall, in which the American University Union had its headquarters and where I received my mail. I soon found a short cut and used it when time was pressing. Otherwise I varied my mail trips, taking longer routes and exploring as I went. One very interesting route took me through the famous Soho district, well known then as now for its theaters, night clubs, and used-book stalls. Covent Garden and the Haymarket areas always turned up something of interest. Oxford and New Oxford streets, Tottenham Court Road, and streets leading from them, all in the heart of a great shopping district, were frequently traveled as I wandered about.

On Oxford Street was located a tobacconist's shop well known then and now to tourists and travelers. The shop window displayed a sign proclaiming, "American spoken here." Oxford Street tailors were well known in England for their work and wares.

The well-known Strand had its beginning near Aldwych and the Eagle Hut and ended in Trafalgar Square, a distance of one mile. Along the Strand were many historic places; the one I now remember best was Charing Cross. Weatherbeaten and worn, the famous cross has stood in place since early in the fourteenth century. Edward I's wife died in Scotland while the king was campaigning there, and the body was brought back to London for burial. King Edward caused a stone cross to be erected at each place where stops at night were made, the last being in Charing Cross, London. I was told that only three of the crosses were standing in 1919. Not far away is Westminster Abbey, where the queen was buried. The Strand is a narrow thoroughfare and always heavily traveled. London "bobbies" quietly and efficiently handled traffic problems.

London England, May 27, 1919

Dear Folks: - Your letter came this morning, and I will answer it immediately. I am sorry to learn of Grandma's illness and hope for a better report soon. I do so much wish to see her again, and the time for my homecoming is not far distant. If she had some of Grandpa's vitality, she would have several more years of life.

I do not know what delayed my letters in reaching you. Censorship ceases June 1, and that may speed things up. Were any of my letters censored as was an earlier one? I received three letters yesterday and four today including a fine newsy one from Bertha and Edith Rogers.

Company N was still in France ten days ago. I received a card from one of the boys today telling me they are on their way to the coast and were then at

Le Mans. I shall never forget Company N and its fine fellowship. The boys are a whole-souled and good-hearted crowd, fine friends and comrades. I hear occasionally from a few of the men and hope to see them again. Just a year ago today I stepped off the train in Camp Sherman, and of the year I have spent nine months in Europe.

When I view my army life as a whole, I consider the European part as the better. Living conditions are better and work less arduous in Europe than in the States. I enjoyed life at Sherman but was there for such a short time that it hardly counts. Humphreys with its heat, rats, and poor food now seems like a nightmare. After I am discharged, I may write a description of my experiences, including my sojourn in England, which is the best of the lot.

I am thinking of writing a series of articles for local papers at home dealing with Anglo-American relations. There has always been much unjust criticism of England dating back to Colonial times, and people of both countries know little of each other. Our people still think of England as the country whose government levied the tax on tea and judge everything else accordingly. German propaganda has skillfully played up the prejudices and played down the good. Strong and lasting friendship between Great Britain and the United States will do more than anything else to insure peace in the world.

I took in a good show last night in which the players were Americans and the stage settings strictly "United States." England is a great nation and all that, but it surely does make one straighten up when the old Stars and Stripes appears and an American speaks.

Tonight we go to Mrs. Astor's party to meet the Duke of Connaught, Rudyard Kipling, and other celebrities. Hawker, the flyer who fell into the Atlantic trying to cross it, arrives today and is the hero of the hour. A big reception is planned for him, and I will be there if time permits.

I am enclosing prints that are not very good; I shall have better ones printed when I get home. Eastman Kodak does the best work here, but it takes forever and a day to get work done. I have found a good box and will send the German gun to Wilber soon. I will also be sending books and papers. Tell Aunt Libby that I will write her a full account of Mrs. Astor's reception for soldier students. Tell her too that I do not wish letters of this sort to get into the papers. Descriptions of such things as hobnobbing with royalty, in some circles, would be construed as bragging; and as you know, I am not a "show off."

I had a reply from Bowling Green today - nothing doing - job already filled. It is dinner time so will close. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

When I left the army I fully intended writing an account of my experiences while they were still fresh in mind. However things started to happen with such rapidity that it was forty-eight years before I got around to doing the job.

Grandma Foote was in poor health when I entered the army in May, 1918. Her condition gradually worsened, and reports reaching me in England led me to believe that death was imminent. I was told several times that she hoped above all to live long enough to see me again. During my last few weeks in England I had a feeling that I was racing against time. My grandmother was very dear to me and I too hoped to see her again in life. The last chapter in my story will tell how the race ended.

Trafalgar Square has ever been the hub of London. The Nelson Column and statue, the fountains, and the many famous streets leading away from the Square, add to picturesque details. On one side are the world-famous Art Galleries and the Museum of Art; on another stands St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, the parish church of the royal family. Whitehall and the Mall lead away from the Square

toward Westminster and the Thames River. Whitehall takes its name from a former palace of that name, still standing and in use as a museum. The ill-fated King Charles I was the last royal occupant. Nearby is St. James Park and palace where the famed Horse Guards still mount their daily watch before a palace in which kings have not resided since 1648. A tourist mecca, and a good one. I snapped a picture of a mounted guard as he stood his horse at a rigid "attention." At the end of the Mall stands Buckingham Palace.

Pall Mall led away from Trafalgar Square and on it were many of London's best-known social clubs for men. Piccadilly and Piccadilly Circus, and Leicester Square and Leicester Circus were close by and veritable magnets for curious visitors. Large public meetings and demonstrations often took place, then and now, in Trafalgar Square. I witnessed such a meeting when the government staged a big bond-selling rally with the police watching for pickpockets. One of our men caught a "pocket" artist in the act and turned him over to an officer.

Hyde Park and Regent's Park both are open to the public and have been for many years. We had often heard about the Hyde Park corner where free speech gets a big play. We found it as described, and with amusement we watched a procession of soapbox orators vie for attention. No subjects were barred and a policeman stood nearby to protect the orators from violence. We heard one orator attack the institution of monarchy while another verbally demolished the Church of England. One overgrown and obese speaker belittled American effort in the war, and we Americans were tempted to object forcefully; but a glance at the policeman changed our minds, and we turned our attention to another shouter who was attacking Lloyd George and his handling of the pension problem. And so it went during the two hours we spent in the park. Regent's Park had a fine zoo, and we enjoyed watching the animals, especially the antics

of the monkeys. In one of these parks was a long drive reserved for horseback riders who came daily to exercise their steeds. Riders were always dressed for the part, boots, riding coats and breeches, feathered cap, etc. The pathway bore the rather strange name, that to us was strange, of "Rotten Row." And I have never been able to find how the name originated.

Two of us were exploring one day and entered a small and ancient church near London Bridge. The rector of the church, who extended us a hearty welcome and briefed us on the history of the building, told of a German bomb falling in the river during a Zeppelin raid and splashing the premises with both water and fish. When he discovered that both of us were Masons, he invited us into his private offices and showed us his clerical and Masonic vestments. Our new friend was serving as chaplain of two high-degree Masonic Lodges. As we left, he directed our course across the bridge to Southwark Cathedral, located at the other end. We followed directions and spent an hour or more exploring the ancient edifice, which contained among others, several graves of crusaders of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Not far away was the Tower Bridge, and well beyond it were the London docks. Exploring had sharpened our appetites, and we lunched in a tavern that dated back to the great London fire of the 1660's. Lamb chops, brussel sprouts, etc. I liked lamb, but my friend did not; there being no substitutes, we made out.

London, England, May 29, 1919

Dear Folks: - This is a fine morning, and I am waiting for my lecture hour. I usually rise at 7:30, have breakfast, and arrive at the Eagle Hut about 9:15. I read the papers and if no classes are scheduled, I write letters or go exploring. Today I have a class beginning an hour from now.

Tomorrow is Memorial Day, and we will observe it by going out to Brookwood American Military Cemetery where 129 soldiers are buried. British representa-

tives will join with us in the formal service, the best we can do for the boys who died over here. Services will be held in all American cemeteries where American soldiers are buried, at home and abroad.

Your letter and the twenty-ninth roll of papers came yesterday; I am happy to have both. I am glad Wilber has a car of his own now. I will be ready for the ride he promised me.

Farmers in America are much better supplied with the comforts of life than are farmers here. Farms here are very small and automobiles out of question except for the landowning class and well-to-do city dwellers. Americans growl a lot about things, but in comparison with people here, are fortunate. Population is dense, taxes are very high, and a living is hard to make.

The streets of London and other cities teem with old men and women selling matches, post cards, shoe strings, etc.; anything to make a scanty living. In summer months most of these peddlers do not live indoors but are content to sleep in doorways or old packing boxes. At present prices I cannot figure out how they keep soul and body together.

My mail has been coming regularly from the States, but very slowly from France. You will probably receive this letter about June 10, and do not write to me after it arrives. The London base closes June 25, and we are due to leave June 30.

Wilber Foote is in hard luck. Company N is still in France but should precede me home. Earl's division was scheduled to move, but the order was later cancelled. I have no further information from him.

The article in the Cleveland Leader by Frank Simmonds is very good and in many ways I agree with him. I am not venturing any of my own opinions now as the censorship is still on and I want my letters to go through without gaping holes in them.

Commencement was a bit earlier than usual this year, was it not? I would have enjoyed very much being present. It has been seven years since I made a fizzle of my oration on graduation day. Mr. Kissner made a wise move when he did away with those fool orations and substituted a play. Have the high-school teachers been employed yet? I am not looking for a job, just inquiring.

When you see Celia Balckledge again, please tell her I thought her poem very good. I am afraid she is badly mistaken, however, in her facts and conclusion.

Hawker received a great reception, and I saw much of it. It was too dark to get snapshots. Our own Commander Read arrives in England today; when he comes to London, we Americans will whoop it up as did the British for Hawker.

Tuesday evening Mrs. Waldorf Astor entertained our soldier students, and we had a fine time. Present were dukes, lords, ladies, generals, admirals, American officers, and enlisted men. Rank made no difference this time. We were all presented to the Duke of Connaught, who is the king's uncle, and to Rudyard Kipling, England's best-known living poet. At one point in the festivities I found myself in conversation with Mrs. David Lloyd George, the prime minister's wife, and with his private secretary, Mr. Evans. At another point Lady Fisher, wife of the First Lord of the Admiralty, invited me to sit next to her and tell her how we were progressing in school and how it compared with our own. Lady Fisher asked questions concerning my family and my future plans in education, concluding by requesting that I go to the table and bring refreshments for the two of us. While we ate cookies and drank punch, Lady Fisher furthered my education by telling me how social affairs such as this one were planned and conducted. The women seemed anxious to learn of our reactions to British customs, education, and life in general

Among the guests were General Biddle, who commanded American forces in

England, and an American admiral. Several British army and navy officers were also present. The Duke of Connaught greeted each of us with a handshake and a few pleasant words. Rudyard Kipling, soon surrounded by curious and admiring Americans, regaled us with explanations of his writings, travels, and British customs. Mrs. Astor, the life of the party, saw to it that we had a good time throughout the evening. Lord Waldorf Astor did not show up, and no one seemed to miss him.

Please do not give this letter to the Newspaper for reasons already given. Do not write to me again, and I will send you a telegram as soon as we land in the United States. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

London, England, May 30, 1919

Dear Brother: - I am sending to you today a box of souvenirs. The little book is a copy of the Burns poems that I purchased at the old home of the poet in Scotland. The coins are to be divided as follows: A shilling each for Richard and Earl, and one for Father. The small pieces are to go into my own collection. The German pistol is for you.

Please observe the following directions in handling and caring for the pistol: Clean the whole thing thoroughly by pulling back the lock, grasping it by the rough grips and pulling back, thus allowing the pin under the barrel to be removed. After cleaning use an application of cosmoline, vaseline, or gun oil. There are no cartridges in the pistol, and none should be put in; you do not know how to operate it. The caliber is ".32." If rust spots appear, remove them with a soft pine stick and an oily rag.

The pistol was taken from a German officer by an Australian soldier during the big push in August. It is an automatic pistol, accurate, and fires ten times with one loading. I hope the box gets through without damage or tampering.

I am not carrying anything with me beyond necessities - too many thieves.

Today we observed Memorial Day by going out to Brookwood where 129 American soldiers are buried; services were held there. Graves were decorated; the chaplain gave a short address, and our national anthem was played by a band. The ceremonies ended with a firing-squad salute and the sounding of "taps" by a bugler. A special train was run for us and transportation, furnished free.

I am hoping to go to the Isle of Wight tomorrow if weather permits. Wight, a little island off the south coast, is famed as a summer resort. Four weeks from now we pack up for home. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

Irregular boat service caused me to abandon my plans to visit the Isle of Man. At the last minute I decided to go to Margate instead of Wight and a later letter refers to the visit.

A letter I wrote about my visit to Canterbury does not appear in the collection. A group of students spent a day in Canterbury, which is one of England's most historic places. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the most important and first-ranking prelate in the Church of England, has his headquarters in the old cathedral which dates back to the eleventh century. We explored the cathedral and saw the chapel where Archbishop Thomas à Becket was murdered at the instigation of the king. Not far from the cathedral we saw the little chapel where the first Christian Mission in England was established by the missionary monk, Augustine, in 597 A.D. Our journey from London to Canterbury reminded us so much of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales that we reviewed them as we traveled along.

London, England, June 5, 1919

Dear Folks: - How do you like my new kind of writing paper? I grew tired of

the "Y" paper and am trying something else. I can write as poorly on this as any other kind. Do you have trouble deciphering my scribbling?

I have just finished reading the thirty-second roll of papers and found a lot of news, especially in the Mount Vernon and Fredericktown publications. The Free Press shows much improvement over the sheet formerly put out by Mr. Day. I am writing to tell the editor how much I enjoy reading his paper. I send him a London paper occasionally. How do you like the London papers I send home? British papers and magazines in many ways are inferior to ours.

We were paid today for the month of May and, except for quarters and rations, may not be paid again until discharge. Notices have been posted warning us to stay in London after June 25 and to be within an hour's call. The notice further reads that we leave June 30 and that all men belonging to the army of occupation will return to it, all others to be sent home with all possible speed. I am setting July 20 for my homecoming; will I make it? The army will decide.

The great Derby race was held yesterday before an immense crowd. It is England's top sporting event and thousands of pounds change hands in bets. A horse named Panther was the favorite but came in after ten others had finished.

I saw more notables today. The President of Brazil with members of the royal family drove through the streets on the way to the Lord Mayor's residence for a luncheon. I wish you could see a procession in which the King figures or which honors a visiting ruler. Policemen keep the streets clear, and the crowds at a safe distance. First of all riding on horseback comes a couple of guards wearing red coats, silk hats, and black top boots. Next comes a squadron of the imperial-guard cavalry with drawn sabers; then a couple more red-coated individuals follow by the carriage drawn by four black horses, two of them with riders wearing red coats, top hats, and black boots, and two more of the same descrip-

tion on top of the carriage. The rear is brought up by another squadron of cavalry with two more gents in red coats following on foot. There were three carriages in today's procession.

The whole show is born of tradition and is centuries old. People love it. The bright colors and drawn sabers flashing in the sun make a powerful appeal to Londoners, and they forget their troubles for a couple of hours.

I wish too that you could see the horse guards on parade or the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. I waited an hour to see the spectacle, and it was worth waiting for. I visited Kensington Museum yesterday, one of the largest in the world. The buildings are new and contain many valuable specimens.

Commander Read came to London last Sunday, and we Americans turned out to welcome him. We paraded the streets for a time with him, after which he was taken in Hawker's automobile to the Aero Club escorted by five or six hundred yelling "Yanks." Pictures I am sending will enable you to see how it was done. As a maker of noise the "Yank" had no equal. Officers, enlisted men, Red Cross and "Y" all joined in cheering the man who was first to fly across the Atlantic. I was on hand with my faithful camera and secured a shot of Read and Hawker together.

Half of my lectures end this week and we have no school Monday, a church holiday. The other half runs on to the finish. I may make another trip to Scotland or Wales which will be the last except one or two week-end outings. My trip to the Isle of Wight was cancelled when I failed to have my travel voucher approved in time. Too much red tape.

I just received a card from Earl Welker, who was in Coblenz on a three-day leave. I wish Earl could have had leave either in southern France or better still in England. The number of men here on leave is gradually falling off, and

soon there will be none. Weather here is unusually good now, a welcome change. Hope this finds all of you well. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

In all Lady Astor sponsored four receptions for American students in order to accommodate all of us. Invitations were so arranged that approximately an equal number appeared each time to avoid overcrowding. Born in Virginia, Lady Astor never forgot her homeland and made her last visit to the United States only a few years ago, shortly before her death at an advanced ago. Elected to Parliament, she served with distinction, also serving a term as Lord Mayor of Plymouth. Lady Astor won the hearts of the boys who came to her receptions with her open-handed hospitality and gracious manners. When our special train left London bound for Liverpool and a transport, this gracious lady came down to see us off, and we leaned from car windows for a last handshake and a word of farewell.

London, England, June 10, 1919

Dear Folks: - I haven't much to say this time but will do the best I can. I did not go to Scotland as I had intended. The weather has been extremely hot and humid lately, and I did not care to endure another round of crowded traveling conditions. I went down to Margate, a summer resort about fifty miles from London, and spent Saturday there. An enormous holiday rush to the sea for the week end filled up the hotels and boarding houses, and I was unable to get a room for the night. I returned to London late Saturday night to my own room. Margate resembles Cedar Point very much, and the swimming is excellent.

Sunday I spent in Kew Gardens, where it was shady and cool. The Thames River flows through the place, and a cool breeze came up from the sea. The gardens are very interesting with all sorts of trees and plants. Tropical

trees and plants are grown under glass. An estimated throng of 100,000 persons visited the gardens Sunday. I had a nice two-hour ride on the Thames, going and coming.

Yesterday was a church holiday, and a group of us went out to Hampstead Heath, where the poor people have their picnics. The place is fixed up with merry-go-rounds and the carnival attractions we see at home. Thousands of people were milling about, and we saw men, women, boys and girls, drunk as sailors on shore leave. We soon had enough of Hampstead Heath and were back in time to take in a play given for soldiers. The play was a fairly good one and helped us put in the time.

The 21st Engineers sailed last week on the President Grant. The poor fellows have had a weary time waiting in Le Mans. I am mighty glad that I was not there with them; building and repairing roads is far too much like work to suit me.

Three weeks of school remain, and they will soon pass. We are slated to leave June 30, and I will cease writing a little before that date. Thinking about getting home makes writing a bit difficult, now that the show is almost over. I will be the last letter myself, in person. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

I found later that Company N came home on Great Northern, the transport that carried us to France in September, 1918. Actually my old company beat me home by only one month. Changes in orders were to delay us in London a few days as will be told later.

London, England, June 15, 1919

Dear Folks: - Sunday again, and four weeks from today I hope to be with you. Your letter came yesterday, and I am happy to note improvement in health in the

family. Also yesterday I had a letter from Edith telling about excessive rainfall in Ohio. Over here it has not rained to amount to anything for six weeks. It is very warm and the countryside does not look as green as it did a few weeks ago. Things are drying up, a very unusual happening in England where rain comes frequently.

A big water cart goes through the streets every day and waters the trees and bushes planted along the sidewalks. In many places the ground is cracked open; it is so dry. When I first came here, we had rain every day; and now it does not rain at all. Quite a comparison, is it not? I have not done much exploring lately, too hot and dusty.

On Friday evening there was a big public meeting in Albert Hall to welcome establishment of the League of Nations. Albert Hall, one of the largest auditoriums in the world, seats 10,000 persons. The hall was built as a memorial to Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband. It is circular and its acoustics are well-nigh perfect.

Lord Gray, England's foreign minister when the war broke out, was chairman and made a very good opening speech. Lord Cecil, a delegate to the peace conference and a joint-author of the League Covenant, was the principal speaker.

While Lord Cecil was speaking, a man in the gallery called him a traitor and was promptly thrown out by spectators. A delegation of socialists spread out a large banner but failed to get much attention. Such happenings are common in British public meetings, and no one seems to mind. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke as also did a member of Parliament.

The last issue of Stars and Stripes came out Friday, and I am sending you a copy. It is illustrated with a section of photogravures showing the army in preparatory stages of training. Some of the pictures were made at Gondrecourt and near our old camp at Abainville.

Many of our men have left for Brest and transportation home. These men had finished their work in school and are being sent home with all possible speed. My work does not end until June 30, and I will leave with the main body of the student detachment.

Edith told me how the boys took part in the Children's Day program and I can scarcely realize how much they have grown in the year I have been away. I am happy to learn that Paul's eye injury has cleared up. He had a narrow escape from partial blindness.

Karl Keller in a recent letter accepted my suggestion for a reunion but says he must first go to Cleveland. I can well understand this move; his girl lives in Cleveland. Keller reports having a good time in Montpelier University.

School is progressing smoothly and uneventfully. I am in excellent health and looking eagerly forward to reunion. Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

In an earlier comment I referred to the student parliament in the School of Economics and plans for an Anglo-American session. Plans were duly carried out to the edification of all concerned. Whatever was under discussion in the House of Commons became the topic of the evening in Clare Market. Students would choose districts and proceed to represent them as their political affiliations and consciences dictated. Since it was virtually impossible for all of our American students to choose and speak, we were directed to choose one of our number to represent all. We chose a young lawyer from New York and he announced to "Parliament" that he was representing the constituency of "New Amsterdam." A hot debate was going on at Westminster (Parliament) on the subject of "The League of Nations" and our man very ably presented a view of it coinciding with that advocated by President Wilson. The "pro's" shouted "hear, hear", while

the "anti's" hissed or stamped their feet, in true British parliamentary style. The chairman complimented our boy and invited him to move to England and "stand" for Parliament.

I had many fine visits with British students and with a few who came from colonies or foreign lands. The school was the training ground for civil service in the British Empire. Degrees were conferred and certificates granted, based on ability to pass stiff examinations without reference to term or semester hours as we understand them in our colleges. It was no disgrace to fail in an examination; one simply prepared to try again after further study. The examiner's word was "law," and no questions were raised concerning fairness or "teacher's pets." On the whole, I liked the system and the business-like attitude toward it maintained by both faculty and students. Universities and colleges all required comprehensive entrance examinations which weeded out weak and unprepared applicants. We Americans were admitted as special students and were not required to take the examinations.

London, England, June 17, 1919

Dear Dad: - I just received letters from home and will reply at once, answering the question concerning school.

Please tell Mr. Swank that I cannot consider anything less than the salary figure already given him. Had I asked for $80, they would probably have offered $60. It was kind of him to keep the offer open, and I know he and Mr. Thompson wish to do the right thing. I do not care to teach in a country school again, and I thought I was cutting down considerably to give the board the figure I did. My college work and experience surely entitle me to something; and I feel that the board is taking an undue advantage, knowing I am late coming home.

As far as I am concerned, the whole thing is off. I will pick up a job in due time; and if I do not, I can't see you kicking me out. Right now I am more

interested in getting home than in anything else, positions and salaries go hang.

I am happy to hear you are having good growing weather. It is very hot and dry here, a very unusual occurrence. I may be home before threshing season ends and hope to get in for a few chicken, gravy, etc., dinners. All the school boards on earth won't stop me enjoying old-time home cooking again.

Thirteen days more and we set sail, probably by way of Brest. I will telegraph you as soon as we land stateside. We are hoping for a fast transport, such as Leviathan, Mt. Vernon, or Great Northern.

I have a class coming up so will close. Prof. Knowles lectures today on "Germany before the War." Love and best wishes,

Gilbert.

I visited Parliament several times and heard some fine debates. We met a number of the members who permitted us to question them on public issues. I shall never forget the unfailing courtesy of these busy men who consented to stop long enough to greet and talk to us. On my last visit to the House of Commons I saw a young member who even then was a world figure. This man was head of the British Admiralty when the war broke out in 1914, later resigning and entering the army. Now he had returned to Parliament and was again a member of the Cabinet. He did not speak while we were in the gallery but did later. His name - Winston Churchill.

London, England, June 25, 1919

Dear Folks: - Since last writing to you I received good news that I am sure will be of interest to you. After mailing my last letter to you, I received one from Professor Seale of Kent State and Superintendent of Cuyahoga Falls schools, W. H. Richardson. I am offered a position in Cuyahoga Falls at $135 per month in a field of work just to my liking, history, sociology, and economics. I was requested to cable my answer to Mr. Richardson at his expense. I decided at

once to accept and have cabled my answer.

The salary does not quite come up to the figure I had previously set, but Mr. Seale tells me that there is little chance of getting anything without a personal interview. Cuyahoga Falls is six miles from Kent and a suburb of Akron. I am sure I will like the town and its schools.

In this morning's mail I received a box of candy from a friend in Kent; it had been on the road since June 2. The package came in good shape and the home-made candy is excellent. I am sending home today several envelopes containing letters, pictures, post cards, etc.

Tomorrow we receive our ration and quarters money now amounting to $94 each. I will then do a bit of necessary shopping preparatory to leaving London.

Unless something of great importance turns up, I will not write again. Hoping to see you soon, and with love to all, I will close.

Gilbert.

The message from Prof. Seale and Supt. Richardson marked a definite turning point in my life and future educational career. Mr. Richardson was a well-known educator; and, while I was in school in Kent, he had one time spoken before a class in which I was enrolled. Harry Kane, a former classmate of mine, and a teacher in the Falls schools, corresponded with me during my army days, speaking favorably about both superintendent and the schools. I have ever considered it an honor and a great opportunity to have been appointed sight unseen. Mr. Richardson became a second father to me and guided me through preparatory phases of practical school management until in 1932 I succeeded him as superintendent of schools. But this is getting into another story, and it will be told in due time.

Another order came out before June 30 setting our departure date from London

on July 5. And so we prepared to celebrate July 4 in London, and we did as will be described in a later comment.

AND IN CONCLUSION

Our last week in London was a rather hectic but satisfying experience. When the order setting June 30 as our departure date was rescinded, July 3 was substituted. Another order quickly followed moving the date to July 5, and an explanation was forthcoming to the effect that a dockworkers' strike in Liverpool was causing delay. All out-of-town trips had been prohibited, and we were ordered to stand by on an hour's notice. My room lease expired June 30, and I moved to the Eagle Hut where I was assigned a cot and baggage space. After forty-eight years three things stand out in my memory of that last week.

A small group of students, of which I was one, had gone on many exploring expeditions in the city and had attended shows together. We had also frequently lunched together and had become close friends. A final dinner party was deemed advisable and in keeping with our pending separation; so we met for the last time in one of our favorite spots and had a most enjoyable evening. Mixed with all the joy of going home, there was a note of sadness; we were never to meet again.

The next outstanding and never-to-be-forgotten event happened on the night of June 28. The great peace conference had ended with terms presented to German envoys for acceptance. The first enemy delegation had refused to sign and a second one came to Paris for a final fling at officially ending the war. With allied armies poised for invasion of Germany proper, the Germans on the afternoon of June 28 signed the treaty in the Palace of Versailles, and President Wilson immediately left for home. The news of the signing was flashed

to London and all over the world at once. London had been breathlessly waiting the word for hours; and when it came, restraint became a byword.

Trafalgar Square and all streets leading to it within minutes filled with milling and jubilant crowds of men, women, and children. Traffic ceased, many business places closed, and, as time went on, movement except with the crowd became well-nigh impossible. Every person in the city seemed bent on getting down into the historic centers where celebrations had been held since the days of Wellington and his defeat of Napoleon. It was impossible to keep with a party of friends, and it was every man for himself. Two of us did manage to stay together most of the time. We were milling along with the crowd in the Strand when a shout went up ahead of us, and it was relayed back toward Aldwych, "Buckingham Palace, his Majesty, the King." Slowly the jubilant crowd moved to the Mall and then on to the palace. Time after time, King George V and his family came out on a balcony and waved to the people. At last we found ourselves below the balcony and yelling with the rest at the top of our voices. Satisfied, the crowd moved slowly on and after three hours we found ourselves back at the Eagle Hut.

The celebration continued through most of the night, and the newspapers next day told of similar happenings throughout the kingdom and elsewhere. The crowd was the largest and best behaved I had ever seen up to that time, or since. Breathless and exhausted, our party reassembled in the Eagle Hut and ordered refreshments; but to our dismay the help had all decamped and joined the throng, and could we blame them? One by one, the help returned, and we were served our sandwiches and coffee. It was an experience of a lifetime, one we would not have missed for all the diamonds in South Africa.

American authorities and the "Y" set up a July 4 program at the Eagle Hut, and a large number of our men were on hand. His Royal Highness, the Prince of

Wales, arrived promptly at 10:00 a.m. as our guest of honor. Twenty or twenty-five of us were recruited from the hut to serve as a guard of honor and we lined up on either side of the walk leading to the front door. The Prince was accompanied by his younger brother, George, Duke of York, and an aide. We stood at attention and saluted as the royal party passed between our impromptu lines; we then followed, taking seats reserved for us. The hut was crowded to the rafters and we cheered as only Americans can when given an opportunity. Two future kings stood before us, descendants of King George III and a long line of royal ancestors.

When quiet was restored, the Prince addressed us briefly and wished us a pleasant voyage home. More cheers followed as the party left the hut. The American representative in England, Ambassador Davis, gave us a short speech; a band played; and our commanding officer bade us godspeed. We just could not refrain from giving a few more cheers before departing on the day's business.

We visited headquarters in the afternoon and collected our pay for June and our reimbursement for rations and quarters. The paymaster paid us off rapidly and efficiently in American money; yes, in dollar bills. With tongue in cheek the clerk explained that it took all the fives, tens, and twenties to pay the officers and field clerks. I had almost $200 coming and all in ones. I found a paper sack, stuffed the bills into it, and on advice of the self same clerk, went across the street to the American Express office and purchased an express order, keeping a modest sum for everyday use. I carried the order home in my billfold, which I always carried in an inside pocket. We had a lot of merriment about the one-dollar bills. Good old American money, how good it looked after the soap-wrapper and wallpaper-looking currency to which we had become accustomed!

We had taken leave of the London School of Economics a few days before

July 5. The registrar had presented each of us with a certificate of attendance and, as we bade him farewell, wished us a pleasant voyage home and a safe landing. Our mission in the United Kingdom was completed and we hoped, successfully. In spite of wartime tensions and privations, the people with whom we had contact in London and elsewhere treated us with courtesy and kindness. And in so far as I know we reciprocated in turn.

Each of us, armed with a copy of our travel orders and commutations of rations for our journey to Liverpool, reported promptly to the railroad station and went aboard a special train. Mrs. Astor came down to see us off as she had promised to do. As we moved slowly through the suburbs of London, we settled back in our seats; the army was on the move again, and one more chapter of our military careers had ended.

The daylight ride to Liverpool was delightful, and at last we approached the gang plank of the U. S. Army transport Plattsburg. The usual checkoff over, we were assigned quarters and instructed to stay aboard ship. Later on order came out saying we would not sail until the day following and that limited shore leave would be granted. Only a few men took advantage of the offer. The dock strike delayed sailing until afternoon next day, and then we slowly pointed down the Mersey estuary toward open sea, headed for Brest. Plattsburg was sailing light with her accomodations only half taken, and we had liberty to explore the decks with only one portion off limits. Cabins on the foredeck were occupied by a number of war brides on their way to America and their husbands. We had watched the brides come aboard in Liverpool and had given them a hearty cheer.

We soon discovered that the transport had a place in history. During the Spanish-American war, the New York was the flagship of the blockading fleet off Santiago, Cuba, in the memorable running fight in which Admiral Cervera's

Spanish fleet was destroyed when it attempted to run the gauntlet of the American fleet. Several years after that war the New York was decommissioned, stripped of her armor, and converted into an army transport, the Plattsburg. Food was good, and the sea as quiet as a mill pond. Two days later we pulled into Brest, disembarked, and again climbed that long hill leading to Camp Pontenezan. No stone barracks awaited our coming this time; we were housed in clean, modern barracks of American design, and there was no mud; in fact, there was plenty of dust underfoot.

In the barracks we found men in charge who quickly and efficiently assigned cots and gave us instructions on procedure. We were told that we had liberty to leave the immediate area only after 6:00 p.m. and that no passes would be issued for leaving the camp. "Tomorrow morning," said the sergeant, "you guys will get the works, and if you are physically fit and mentally balanced, you will soon be on the briny." And next morning we did get the "works." We were first organized into casual companies and assigned officers and non-coms. My company drew as captain a fine young officer, Captain Sawtelle; the names of others have long since escaped my memory.

Physical examinations and inspection of clothing and equipment followed and our records were checked for errors or omissions. My company checked out to a man, and no one was held for later transportation as sometimes happened. Regardless of where we had been stationed, we were required to visit the delousing unit where our clothing was put through a steam-pressure process and turned out almost unrecognizable. We were told that necessary new clothing would be given us in the States. "Fatigue" uniforms were issued to be worn on shipboard. We had ample time out for meals and found food in this camp good and wholesome. Better still, there were no kitchen or serving details from our company.

After 6:00 p.m. on our first evening after examinations a group of ex-students decided to explore a bit. Several of us, having been quartered in the old stone barracks on our first trip, decided to pay a call and note changes, if any. Ten minutes' walk brought us to the designated place, and from outside appearances nothing had changed. A prisoner detail was engaged in cleaning the insides of the barracks, and the sergeant in charge would not admit us beyond a peek from the doorways. One "peek" was enough to bring back memories of other and more anxious days. I discovered too that units of the 4th Division were coming into camp and I made a few inquiries. Earl Welker was in a machine-gun battalion, and I thought I might by chance find him. In response to my inquiries, an officer told me that the detachment I had just seen was a sort of advance guard to prepare the way for the main body scheduled to come in a few days later. I later found that Earl did come in the day we sailed, and he arrived home a few days after my homecoming as did Wilber Foote and Karl Keller. I did not know it at the time but my cousin Anna Foote, Wilber's sister came home on the same ship that carried me. Anna served with the Lakeside Hospital Unit, which was attached to the British army most of the time.

On the evening of July 13 we were ordered to be ready next morning for the road. After a good breakfast we once more strapped on our packs, which by this time had been reduced to absolute necessities and were soon going down the now familiar long hill to the docks. Another check at the gang plank and we boarded the Dutch liner Rotterdam. We occupied steerage compartments, and there was plenty of room for the 800 American soldier passengers. We had ample bunk space contrasting sharply with facilities aboard Great Northern, the transport that carried me to France. The complement of nurses was already aboard as was Secretary of State Lansing who was homeward bound from the peace conference with his official party. No time was lost in pulling in the gang plank, and we were off.

Brest harbor is located on a river estuary and actually is miles inland. As our ship passed slowly down the channel, the river gradually widened and we viewed with mingled feelings the ancient landmarks as one by one they disappeared in distance. Finally we reached the open stretches of the Bay of Biscay and only one rocky headland remained in sight; and then our friend from Arkansas pronounced a benediction I never will forget. His name I have long since forgotten, but I do remember that he was a graduate student in English literature and he was preparing to teach. The day we visited Stoke Poges churchyard this man had astonished and inspired us by reciting from memory Gray's "Elegy" as he stood near the poet's tomb. Ordinarily our friend used faultless English in speaking; but he could, and often did, lapse into the famous Arkansas drawl, as he was to do on this occasion. "Well, boys, thar it goes; I wouldn't trade the poo'st fahm in all Arkansaw foh the hull damn country." We had never before heard the man use expletives or profanity, nor did he again in our hearing; he was not being profane; he meant what he said, and we silently agreed.

At sea Rotterdam picked up speed and took the southerly route which carried us near the Azores islands, where we saw a few fishing boats far out from land. A few cargo and passenger vessels were sighted as we sped on our journey. Food was plain but plentiful, and the stewards worked up a business by bringing us chicken sandwiches below decks before we turned in for the night. We suspected a bit of graft and chicanery but had no reason for complaint. By day and by night the skies were cloudless most of the time, and the ocean was as quiet as the proverbial mill pond. I had no more trouble with seasickness nor did I see anyone making for the rail with hand over mouth. We were going home, why worry?

By the southerly route Rotterdam was an eight-day liner so we settled down to a routine of deck walking, group visiting, loafing in the sun, napping, and

speculating on the future. A few desultory card games were played without the usual stakes, and a few of us with cameras made snapshots. From time to time we could see the nurses at a distance and one witty individual came up with a suggestion for meeting them. "It's simple", he said, "let one of us come down with smallpox and start an epidemic, and then the captain will need nurses to get us back on our feet; do we have a volunteer?" That suggestion died aborning as did a few others. Word went round that Mr. Lansing would pay us a call, and we were told to keep well shaved and respectable in appearance. The gentleman never did appear and was first off the boat when we landed.

We knew we were approaching the American coast when a friendly English-speaking steward told us one evening that about midnight we would pass within sight of a lightship off the New England coast. One of the deck officers verified the report and told us there were no rules prohibiting our sleeping on deck if we cared to do so. We retired to our bunks at the usual hour when lights were dimmed but found the air below decks warm and uncomfortable, or so it seemed. One by one, silent figures slipped out of bunks and disappeared up the ladders. I found the bunk atmosphere heavy and uncomfortable and soon joined my fellow passengers on deck. For the most part we sat silently on the starboard or right side, keeping our thoughts to ourselves. And presently we saw in the distance a light off the prow, rising and falling with the waves. As distance narrowed, the light came closer and it had a friendly gleam as it seemingly waved us a welcome. That bobbing light meant much to us who were now returning from our great adventure, safe and sound by the grace of God, and thankful.

As I silently watched that light, my whole life passed before me in review and then and there I thanked my Maker for deliverance and vowed to take up where I had left off and to the end try to be a true and faithful servant of

God and man. Presently the light dropped astern and then disappeared. And silently, one by one, we returned to our bunks where the air was now strangely cool and comfortable to sleep, and to dream of the homecoming tomorrow. All of this happened forty-eight years ago, this silent vigil on the deck of Rotterdam, but to me now at age seventy-two, that light shines brightly, and I hope and believe that it will continue to do so to the end.

Rotterdam anchored outside New York harbor until morning was well advanced and then moved in, picking up a pilot on the way. The American flag was raised according to international custom, and we proceeded slowly past the Statue of Liberty and finally docked alongside other passenger liners. Not an eye missed the famous "lady" as we passed by, and we were greeted at the docks by an enthusiastic crowd. We waited until all passengers had left the ship and entered customs. Our gang plank was then put in place, the usual checking quickly dispatched, and we happily walked onto good old American soil. The Red Cross had a good breakfast waiting for us, and Western Union agents supplied telegraph forms for our use in notifying home folk of our safe arrival.

A Long Island Railway train carried us to Camp Mills on Long Island near the village of Hempstead. No time was lost ushering us into barracks and assigning us cots and blankets. Another round of examinations soon got underway and we were informed as to what we could keep and what to turn in. Overcoats were optional as were the extra shoes. I decided to take everything I could honestly, and I received good underwear, good socks, and a good shirt. I tried to trade uniforms but failed, and I had to wear home the outfit ruined by the delouser in Brest. The army still had strange ways (to me), and I suppose it operates in like manner today. Our pay records were brought up to date and everything put in readiness for our discharge on July 26. On our last evening in camp two of us walked to Hempstead and purchased cheap suitcases for the

final trip home.

We received orders to remain in our barracks briefly after our evening meal on July 25 or until an official visitor had departed. The visitor was a young captain who explained to us what was available in the way of jobs with the civil service and offered application blanks for future use. The officer in concluding his remarks told us that we could reenlist if we wished and choose our own field of service. Several men took civil service information and application forms, but enlistment in the army produced much merriment in which the captain joined. Wishing us well, the captain left after telling us that he was leaving the army in September to resume his place on a college faculty. We gave him three cheers and a tiger as he was leaving. The following afternoon we lined up in front of an office where our discharge papers, pay, and bonus, were waiting. One by one, we moved up, signed, and received the coveted papers. Included with our papers was a transportation voucher which would cover travel to the point of enlistment.

Railway time tables were available in the camp transportation office and we made good use of them. Five of us wishing to travel west found that our best route out the evening of July 26 was by way of the Pittsburgh and Fort Wayne Railroad on a train leaving at 8:30 from the Pennsylvania station in New York. We bargained with a loquacious taxi driver and for two dollars each we were driven in a Model T Ford to our destination. The only things I remember about that drive were the Brooklyn Bridge and the driver's never-ending flow of chatter about his own war experiences.

I found a seat with a young ex-soldier bound for his home in Effingham, Illinois. This man had been absent from his home almost two years and would be married soon after the day of his return. The train was crowded; the night, hot and humid; and the road, rough and bumpy. We did manage a bit of sleep but

would wake up when stops were made. The train was not a speedster, and it was a long time before Pittsburgh was announced. My travel voucher called for me to change trains at Orrville to the Cleveland, Akron, and Columbus branch of the Pennyslvania which would take me to Mount Vernon, the place of enlistment. I knew from experience that my best bet was to stay on the Pittsburgh and Fort Wayne train to Mansfield, change to the Baltimore and Ohio, and get off at Ankenytown, a hamlet near my home. I paid the slight difference in fare and eventually found myself on the station platform at Ankenytown. It was Sunday morning, and the hour was about 11:30. The family, of course, did not know when I would show up, so no one was waiting. As no one was in sight about the station, I picked up my cheap suitcase and started up the railroad tracks toward home, a distance of one and a half miles. Ah, but it was good to see familiar sights on every hand. I had walked that stretch of track many times and knew all the familiar landmarks. I could not help quoting to myself a bit of Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel," and how right he was,

"Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land?
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?"

The spell lasted while I passed over a bridge where I had often swum and fished, and on between high banks and around a bend; and there before me, a quarter of a mile ahead was - Home.

Our house was about a hundred yards from the railroad property and I soon covered the well-worn path leading to the yard. My presence was discovered by the faithful Shep, a dog of uncertain parentage, and the property of my brother

Wilber. The dog recognized me, and her joyful barking brought Wilber out to see what was going on. Greetings followed as the brothers were reunited. Wilber was alone in the house, having driven Father and Mother to our Grandfather Foote's home in Fredericktown where a family gathering was in progress. From Wilber I learned that Grandma Foote was able to be about and expecting me home soon. My brother had other plans for the day but changed them, deciding to take me into town immediately. I improved my appearance as best I could while Wilber finished dressing. I made a hurried tour of the old home I had left fourteen months before and found it all to the good.

Wilber invited me to take the wheel of the family car, and I accepted. I had not touched a steering wheel since leaving home and it felt good to sit once again in the driver's seat. Over roads I had traveled hundreds of times we went, passing houses and places I knew so well, past the old Brick school where I attended elementary grades, and on to the road leading into town. Somewhere along the way I quoted more poetry and with feeling:

"How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view!
The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wildwood,
And every loved spot that my infancy knew;
The cot of my father, the dairy house nigh it,
And e'en the rude bucket that hung in the well."

Yes, I saw all these things that morning with one exception. If ever there had been an oaken bucket in the well, it had long since been replaced by a stout hand pump. And so in a poetic frame of mind we drove to my grandfather's house. A long porch extended all the way along the west end and on part of the north side. Wilber had told me enroute that Grandpa Foote was temporarily laid up with an injured leg and walked with a cane. In view of Grandma's poor state

of health the family gathering was being held in town. Guests present were Father and Mother, my sister and husband Paul DeBolt, their two little boys, Richard and Earl, and their seven-months-old Lawrence, the child born during my absence, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles King, cousins of Mother. My Aunt Libby, faithful letter writer and news reporter, was acting as hostess. Little Lawrence became a soldier in W.W. II and is now a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army. A family reunion is too moving and too sacred to describe in detail, and I will add only one detail.

Grandfather with his cane had greeted me at the door along with the others while my grandmother waited inside. "Now," said Grandfather, "your grandmother is waiting." And so she was; rising from her chair with the grace and dignity that had characterized her throughout life, she spoke her words of welcome from the heart, saying that she had lived for this day. And so she had. Four weeks later we buried Sarah Rogers Foote, my grandmother, in beautiful Forest Hill cemetery where she rests with four generations of my family.

FINIS

COMPANY N BIOGRAPHY

TWENTY-FIRST ENGINEERS

LIGHT RAILWAY - A.E.F.

Company N Biography
Twenty-First Engineers Light Railway - A.E.F.

Originally prepared by Gilbert Roberts in 1919;
Revised and extended by Gilbert Roberts and Walter E. Seiler in 1964.
Contributions and suggestions have been made by several Company N men and insofar as possible, credit has been given in the narrative that follows, dedicated to:

OUR COMRADES WHO HAVE PASSED BEYOND THE LAST PICKET LINE

Declaration of war in April, 1917, found our country unprepared but ready for a supreme effort that soon placed it side by side with European allies in the final struggle that led to victory in 1919. Among the many training centers hastily set up for preparing men for military service was Camp A.A. Humphreys located near the city of Washington, near the Potomac River, and on historic grounds only a few miles from the George Washington mansion at Mount Vernon. The land was a part of the original Lord Fairfax grant dating back to Colonial Virginia, and the foundations of the old Fairfax home, Belvoir, were still to be seen in the section occupied by Company N and appropriately named Belvoir. The whole Military Area is now known as Fort Belvoir and is the permanent headquarters and training ground of the U.S. Engineers Corps. Company N men contributed to the pioneer work in literally carving Camp A.A. Humphreys out of the woods.

In the summer of 1918, men by the thousands were pouring into Humphreys and being assigned to training regiments hastily organized and meagerly equipped. Coming from all sections of the United States, men utterly ignorant of military matters were drilled by non-coms and officers who for the most part had been hastily trained on an emergency basis. From basic training men were selected for the great variety of special services required by engineering demands in making war a successful and going concern. Mistakes were inevitable and misfits only too common as later experience was to reveal; no one questioned either motive or purpose. Transportation, so necessary in military logistics, received special treatment and railroad men of experience were among the first sent to France, among them the first recruited companies of the 21st Engineers. Developing plans by the War Department envisaged the need of companies not only to operate, but to assemble and repair equipment, at or near the area of operations. Company N was destined to assemble and repair, and special training required careful selection of personnel. Service records and civilian occupations came under careful scrutiny.

Company N men will remember that the main areas of Humphreys lay back from the Potomac and near the little village of Accotinck. Connections with a nearby railroad were made by military engineers building a connecting line which included a bridge well known to

men who helped with its construction. Temporary wooden barracks dotted the landscape as trees were cleared away and drill fields laid out. The thin Virginia soil soon turned into clouds of suffocating and blinding dust as thousands of feet were taught by their owners to go right, left, forward, or back. Bathhouses, mess halls, "Y," Salvation Army, and "K.C." Huts arose as by magic along with other buildings necessary to military effort and morale. Post exchanges were well located where men could spend what was left of their money after the "deducs" were made.

A winding road led downgrade and through leafy glades to the Potomac and to a small area near the ruins of the old Fairfax mansion, a place formerly used by Virginia National Guardsmen and known as Camp Belvoir. In this area Company N was assembled after its formal organization on July 5, 1918. Emerging from the tree-shaded road leading down from Humphreys, the drill ground first came into view. To the left were the orderly and supply rooms and what passed as a guard house. Nearby were tents for officers and a sort of natural amphitheater soon to be transformed into a boxing ring, which furnished fun for spectators and sometimes discomfiture for participants. Tents for the men were grouped around two sides and beyond the parade grounds, some near the river and some back into the woods that lay immediately beyond the grounds. An open-air bathhouse was very conveniently located at the edge of the woods, and beyond were the mess hall, the "Y" and the hospital. To the left were the docks where river boats landed; and at a respectable distance were located the pontoon school and swimming facilities. Not far from the docks was a small stand where near-beer, cookies, candy, and newspapers could be purchased. Trees lined the river banks and supplied shade for those lucky enough to get under them during the heat of the day. Such is a description of Camp Belvoir drawn from memory.

Following formal organization on July 5, 1918, Captain John A. Cannon was assigned as commanding officer, relieving Captain T. D. Sterling. First Lieutenants William Bruckman and Hunter McClure were assigned July 15, Second Lieutenant Soderstrom July 11, and Second Lieutenants Smith and Anderson July 18, completing the personnel of Company N's commissioned officers. The first enlisted men arrived in camp July 9 and were quartered in tents already tenanted by large and aggressive rats, who constantly disputed possession. No "Pied Piper" appeared to lead the rat brigade to the engulfing waters of the nearby river and self-appointed rat details furnished fun, fight, and exasperation. Bill Rowland became champion rat catcher, often staying awake all night and his only comment was, as the writer remembers, "I don't like 'em, damn 'em." Within a short time all enlisted personnel arrived and the parade ground became an extremely busy place.

Fifty rifles, teeming with cosmoline, were issued to as many men, the first six squads, as the writer remembers, receiving them. The rifle platoon soon attained a proficiency in the manual of arms unexcelled by any company in camp (it was the only one in camp). How well we remember: "Squads right and left, on right into line, right by squads, to the rear, march, right front into line, wipe that smile off your face, suck in those guts, fall out two minutes

and then fall in, in your proper places, etc., etc." And how well we remember Bill Bruckman's comparison of our lines with a ragged old shirt. Ah yes, one time the guide was right and we went left and narrowly escaped going over the bank into the river. Heat and humidity, heavy uniforms, dust and fatigue, iced tea that burned tongues, tough meat, dry bread, all reminded us that we were at war and that war was not in a class with Sunday-afternoon picnics. But it was not all bad - not by any means.

The boxing ring became a major place of entertainment. Herb Jenny and Fred Radikopf were members of the boxing team along with Watson, Caviolla, and several others. Corporal Stephens was a familiar ringside figure as custodian of the water bucket and sponge, and sometimes serving as referee. Watson, who had fought professionally, was easily camp champion. Ringside collections were sometimes taken with eighty per cent going to winner and twenty to losers. Boxing activities moved overseas with Company N, and the "Y" at Abainville was the scene of many matches and the defeat of our champion at the hands of a fighter from a division passing through the village - officers and men losing sizable sums of money: they bet on the wrong horse. A half holiday gave us a track meet with many of the usual track entries. Baseball was to come later in France when time hung heavy on the hands of men waiting to go home.

The "Y" supplied facilities for writing letters and visiting. The Hut had a stage where boxing matches were staged before the outdoor ring was built. A piano of doubtful tuning and age gave Carl Maier opportunity for entertaining us with his playing, which covered a wide scale of music classifications. Carl's accompaniment enabled us to sing the popular songs of the time as well as many of the old favorites. To the surprise of many when they learned the truth, Carl played entirely by ear, not knowing one printed note from another. Carl's activities were later carried to Abainville and to the end he was our number-one accompanist. Buglers Spicer and Fraser, after diligent practice, attained a high degree of efficiency and could call us out of bed in no time at all. Passes out of camp were difficult to obtain, and the few who went without them sooner or later came to grief.

And do we remember Bevo, the lovable little pup that scampered about camp, visited the tents in search of tidbits, and astonished the officers with his proficiency in drill? Bevo was the property of Fred Radikopf, and in his own words Fred tells the complete story of Bevo later on in this narrative. Fred was a popular figure in camp, our mailman and an all-round good fellow whose genial good nature was infectious. Our memories tell us, too, that a stay that promised two or three weeks at first soon lengthened into one of nearly eight weeks. Dame Rumor had us going to Italy when light underwear was issued and to Russia when overcoats were handed out. Drill became routine, broken only by such incidents as a luckless private fooling with a forbidden cartridge and accidentally discharging his rifle, the ball passing through the tent cover and the incident productive of a sentence at extra duty. The writer's routine was summarily interrupted by being accidentally sent to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington where it took him three days to

convince authorities that a mistake had been made. Minor repairs became necessary to glasses and an error in making out papers was responsible for the three-day hospital stay.

The men were delighted one day when a seaplane alighted on the river near camp and later took off, a bit of action never before witnessed by the great majority of Company N. Airplanes were still novelties to most. A foreign officer visited camp on another day and demonstrated hand-to-hand combat with no weapons other than hands, arms, legs, and feet. The writer to his sorrow served as guinea pig, and along with several others suffered sore muscles for days. Hand-laundry methods were hateful to all of us and electric washers and dryers were unknown. How perspiration and dirt did stick to those uniforms, underclothes, and socks. Enough said; who could forget?

Long-expected orders came on August 28 and orders were issued to break camp. Tents were dismantled and the area abandoned as a training ground. Mosquitoes were a plague and all cots were provided with nets. The writer revisited Belvoir in 1921 and found the drill ground grown up to weeds and all buildings gone with the exception of the orderly and supply rooms. In the main camp area permanent brick buildings were replacing wooden structures. Another visit six years ago found all traces of the old camp gone, the name changed to "Belvoir," the area increased in size by several thousand acres, and the old Belvoir sacred to the memory of Company N changed to an experimental site and closed to visitors. The only familiar view for the writer was across the Potomac toward the Marshall Hall resort, so dear to A.W.O.L.'s from Belvoir in 1918.

Company N entrained late in the afternoon of August 28 and boarded the troopship Great Northern at Hoboken the following day. Becoming familiar with the ship was interesting and the men became sympathetic ever after with sardines, so tightly packed were we in our quarters. The decks were piled high with bulky equipment and there was very little room for comfortable loafing. Officers were constantly ordering us out of this, off that, "keep a lookout for submarines," etc. It was reported on good authority (Pvt. McGreevey) that Great Northern was carrying a troop complement of 4500 men. Of this number Company N supplied about 260 men, six officers, and Bevo (more about him later). There were no latrines aboard, only heads, and these marked by blue lights. Our cots were three high with narrow corridors between. Water was jealously guarded and we had to keep our canteens filled and emergency rations at hand at all times. Abandon-ship and boat drill took both interest and time, and at last we filled out the cards to the home folk, saying we had arrived safely. We were off to our great adventure and getting to the place where no marbles were being given back. Said the philosophic Bill Rowland, "Now I know why fifty of us have rifles; we can fight our way to shore and the others can follow." Said another buck private, "You are mistaken, Bill, you guys with the rifles will drive the others ahead of you and the Germans will get at them first. While they are being chewed up you guys can run to the rear, trade your rifles for boats, and get back home in time for the election." A sense of humor saved many a serious situation from becoming a menace

to health and safety; it took minds away from too much thinking.

Great Northern left port promptly at three o'clock P.M. August 31 in convoy with Leviathan and Northern Pacific. A destroyer escort accompanied us well out to sea and then we were on our own until our approach to European waters. At first the sea was calm and the weather warm; but soon, very soon, things underwent a marked change. Away from the Gulf Stream weather thickened and became colder; the ship began to roll a bit and the great migration to ship's rail began. Seasickness seemed to be epidemic and men who had never missed a meal on land now lost all interest in eating. Said one sick and discouraged buddy, "I am too sick to ever get well." Rolling increased to the point where loose equipment took flight along smooth surfaces. Dishes skidded along the tops of the stand-up tables from which we ate our food (those able to eat), and rumor spread that we were about to encounter a king-size storm and the ship was so overloaded that it was in danger of sinking. In mid-ocean the seas calmed down and most of the sick and discouraged recovered. The writer well remembers a sailor who delighted in coming near the sick contingent and talking about roast fat pork and gravy. Gladly would we have heaved the gob overboard. Boat drills continued and as we approached the submarine-infested coastal waters we were brought to abandon-ship stations before dawn and kept there until broad daylight. Great Northern was provided with deck guns and their crews were constantly on guard. We were six days crossing the Atlantic, and on the morning of the fifth day as we took our boat stations we observed that we were surrounded by a protecting screen of twelve destroyers. While we did not know at the time, this was the area in which the homeward-bound transport Mount Vernon had been torpedoed the day before.

Dismissed from early morning watch, men went below expecting breakfast soon. Action that followed was witnessed by the writer who had remained on deck near the smokestack, too sick to eat, and too weak to care. While we watched, a group of destroyers, three in number, started circling a spot not far from our ship. We saw the depth bomb tossed from the destroyer and the shock of its explosion shook Great Northern from end to end. At the same time the abandon-ship station alarm sounded and all hands came pouring on deck. Not having seen the bomb tossed overboard, those below assumed that we had been hit by a torpedo. The ship's guns opened fire and shells seemed directed to one particular spot. The three transports went into zigzag course patterns and the destroyers searched back and forth and all round. After a long wait the men were dismissed and the destroyers resumed the usual patrol pattern. To his amazement the writer found that his seasickness was gone, and to this day has never returned.

Company N men were extremely fortunate in having crossed the Atlantic on Great Northern. Many transports required as much as two weeks or more for crossing, and on many accommodations and food were primitive. British ships specialized in tea and mutton, and much of the food was reported to be practically uneatable. On the whole, from beginning to end, Company N had a comparatively easy time when all factors were considered. The rugged coastline of La Belle France was a welcome sight, and the final stages of the

journey up the estuary of the river on which Brest is situated raised spirits and banished seasick hangovers. But alas, one more trial remained.

Too large to land at the docks, Great Northern anchored in the harbor and awaited lighter service to unload men and cargo. During the night emergency unloading crews working in four-hour shifts were organized and set to work. The tide was running and lighters rolled and pitched as they lay moored to shipside. Spray soon soaked men working near the water and accidents were bound to happen. A slip on the slippery deck would send an occasional box or barrel into the water and the regular stevedores would curse in either English (with an accent) or French. Company N men were learning the hard way and old-fashioned American profanity joined with British and French in condemning the Kaiser, Germany, and in fact everything that had to do with war. Off-duty crews lay down in the passageways in wet clothing, hoping for the best but prepared for the worst. Our stint completed, we were served a meager meal of bread and bologna, and received orders to go aboard the lighters for transportation to the docks.

Terra firma again! Adjustment from the rolling motion of the sea to normal land conditions was soon made for most of us, but Herb Jenny found it difficult and landed in the hospital. We soon heard about influenza and a few Company N men came down with it. The long march uphill to Pontanezan was hard on men weakened by seasickness and we had stragglers by the way. French civilians, adult, paid us little attention but the young fry besieged us for pennies and cigarettes. Pvt. O'Brien, replying in French, informed the beggars that he had no money. Refusing to believe, one kid came up with the assertion that all Americans had money. Either on the march or shortly after, some of the boys made their first acquaintance with "vin rouge" and at least one doughboy smuggled a bottle of it into the barracks. And those barracks!

Pontanezan barracks, constructed of stone and with stone floors, have been continuously used by armies since early in the reign of Louis XIV, who ascended the French throne early in the seventeenth century. American troops occupied the barracks temporarily during W.W. I and German troops in W.W. II. Only a minority of American soldiers could be accommodated and the great majority lived in hastily built shelters or in pup tents scattered over surrounding fields recently used for agricultural purposes. Mud and mire abounded away from the Pontanezan compound and public indignation finally caused a famous Marine General to be sent to Brest to get the boys out of the mud. Company N was in luck; the stone floors were hard, true, but infinitely better than mud. The few double-decker bunks in the barracks were equipped with grass mattresses that rivaled the floor in hardness. We spent ten days at Pontanezan, and numerous fatigue details from Company N were sent down to the docks. The writer was a member of a detail sent down to help lay a spur railroad track. While on this detail the writer fell into conversation with an American sailor from the transport Mount Vernon and from him received details concerning the torpedoing of that ship, previously referred to in this narrative.

Rations at Pontanezan left much to be desired. Herb Jenny recalls that they consisted of twenty-five pounds of doubtful quality meat, a sack of rotten onions, a few carrots, and black bread. Within the compound fruit (grapes) and a few hard objects resembling cookies could be purchased, and we had our first experience with "Chocolat Menier," hard as concrete and as tasteless as sawdust. Open-air shower baths and French-style latrines attracted our attention, and we felt somewhat self-conscious when the nurses passed nearby without apparently seeing us. We had much to learn. Sick call sent several men to the hospital and a larger number were confined to quarters. Insofar as the writer knows only one man was left in the hospital when the Company finally left Pontanezan after a ten-day sojourn. Returning to Brest in July, 1919, the writer found conditions radically changed and only the old stone barracks presented a familiar appearance; even the docks had changed, with large ships being able to come in close and use gangplanks instead of lighters. And now the forty and eight luxury-cruise Pullmans with flat spots in the wheels.

Company N landed at Brest September 8 and boarded the luxury cruisers ten days later. Five squads with a sergeant in command were assigned to each car. Disposition of packs and rifles was left to men in charge. Room had to be made for rations, which consisted of hard-crust bread, canned beans, canned tomatoes, and canned corned beef (corned willie). Stops along the way gave us access to the famous French coffee substitute so appropriately nicknamed "Jap-a-lac," after a popular American type of varnish. Other names, not appropriate in this narrative and of pure Anglo-Saxon origin, were applied to every facet of cars and rations before the journey of four days and three nights ended. Profane English was considerably enriched as the days went by at, what seemed to us, a snail's pace.

We boarded the cars in mid-afternoon. Yes, Bevo was among those present, but more about the dog wonder later. At first we seemed to be out on a lark, but as night approached it occurred to us that sleeping space might be somewhat limited, and it was, to our sorrow and discomfiture. As we passed through the Tours area our attention was drawn to the famous cave dwellings still in use after a thousand or more years. Coffee stops also took care of part of our latrine needs but not all. American ingenuity took care of the rest through judicious use of empty tomato and bean cans. One bright lad suggested cutting a hole in the floor. The little cupola at the end of the car and on top furnished a vantage place for one man at a time to view the landscape and get away from crowded conditions below. And how did we spend the nights? Cudgel your brains - it should not be too difficult to remember.

With packs and rifles at one end and rations at the other, space for stretching out was drastically limited. Shoulders took more room than feet so we tried the head by feet method. Packed in like sardines we found that if one man moved the whole row responded in domino fashion. Some tried sitting up with head and shoulders hunched over knees, and this worked fairly well if some of the men still took prone positions. Actually there was no satisfactory solution to the problem: we could only shift about as

others shifted, curse the Kaiser, and hope for a speedy arrival at our station. We traveled mostly by day, sitting out the nights in railroad yards and there being constantly shifted from one track to another. One entire night was spent in the yards at Issur-tille and morning found us only two tracks removed from that of the night before, fortunately placed alongside latrines and the water supply. We were now becoming well acquainted with Lister bags and chlorinated water, much to our distaste.

Stops made near vineyards or wine shops encouraged the predatory and thirsty to make foraging expeditions; officers and noncoms could not watch everyone, only hope wrath of the gendarmes would be aroused. The train would often pull away with a few luckless doughboys still on the ground. The last two cars soon had more than their regular complements when boarded by those from cars further forward who had to run for it. The writer well remembers stopping a fight that ensued when three men tried at the same time to drink surreptitiously from a bottle of wine that had been brought aboard, his only reward being a lump on the head. The wine was spilled in the melee. Good tempers became bad, and bad tempers worse as time wore on. A few men became persona non grata in their cars and had to be moved. On the morning of the last day an old French passenger car with most of its windows broken was hitched to the rear, and the tired, angry, and disconsolate assigned to it. And so we arrived at Abainville, without Bevo, but more about Bevo later.

Late in the afternoon of September 22nd Company N left the train at Gondrecourt and marched to nearby Abainville, occupying unfinished barracks, and at last coming to a place where packs could be opened and changes of clothing had. A bathhouse nearby was a welcome sight and overgrown beards soon had razors losing edges as whiskers disappeared. Double-decker bunks lined each side of the barracks and sheet-iron stoves at either end were provided. The sod floors, still grassy, offered a pleasant contrast to other floors recently trodden upon. The kitchen and mess hall were under one roof, the latrines nearby, and the "Y" only a stone's throw away. Orderly and supply rooms were well located and close to the barracks. A Company street ran by the barracks and led down to the highway and to Camp Headquarters, presided over then by Lieutenant Colonel Robertson, one of the picturesque and able figures in the Engineer Corps. Near Headquarters was a Salvation Army hut which also served as meeting place for a Masonic club of which the writer soon became a member.

An extensive light railway system going up to the Meuse-Argonne Area of military operations connected with standard-gauge lines running through Gondrecourt and Abainville. General Headquarters at Chaumont and the Base Hospital at Neuf-Château were several miles to the rear and well connected with field operations by both rail and highway lines. The Gondrecourt Area served as an early training ground for the A.E.F. and the people were well acquainted with American soldiers and their habits. The rolling countryside through which the Meuse River and canal passed reminded men from Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania of their native counties. It was a land of small farms with owners and workers

living in small villages from which they emerged daily to till the land. Living and work habits of the native population never ceased amazing American soldiers.

A distance of two and a half or three miles separated the villages of Abainville and Gondrecourt, the latter being much the larger of the two. Gondrecourt had shops and stores, a good railroad station, cobbled streets, and a generous number of grog shops where vin rouge, vin blanc, cognac, and various and sundry other thirst quenchers could be had. A large post exchange was maintained by the American army and the "Y," Salvation Army, and K.C. Huts were well established. A few French industries were found in the village, and occupying a vantage point was a large Catholic Church. The road to Gondrecourt soon became a familiar pathway for men of Company N. The highway passed over a white limestone base with trees part of the way lining either side; across the railroad and past an old chateau, bending to the right for a considerable distance, and then to the left and slightly downhill, coming to the outskirts of the village. The stoops of the outlying houses usually displayed wooden shoes parked there by their farmer owners, who preferred heavy socks or slippers indoors. Approaching the center of the village the street divided into a Y, the division to the left going out to the military section; the one to the right to the railroad station and church. Along both streets were found stores and shops. The writer last passed along this street when Herb Jenny and Bill Schneyer escorted him to the station to begin a journey ending in England, a transfer that ended his connection with Company N and made him a student in London University. Now back to Abainville.

Abainville was a small village with the highway serving as one street with a cross street running at right angles with it. Other and smaller streets or roads ran out from the principal ones, narrow, rough, and filthy. Barns and living quarters were under the same roof, the former in front on the minor streets and manure piles lay out in or near the streets until owners could transport same to the fields for fertilizing purposes. Shops and cafes were on the main street with few exceptions. The town hall and church occupied land near the intersection of the two principal streets and His Honor, the Maire, lived in the best house in town. There was no local newspaper and the town crier made the rounds every morning to announce news and public pronouncements. On one such occasion the writer met the crier on the street as the following was being proclaimed. "Il est defendu, cognac American soldat vendi." French students may find fault with the writer's use of the language: it is admittedly faulty; but translated it said, "It is forbidden to sell cognac to American soldiers." A knock-down and drag-out fight in a cafe the night before had caused the village fathers to take action. A Company N sergeant and a couple of others were among those present and the sergeant gave the writer a graphic and lurid account of the whole proceddings. According to the informant soldiers from the 88th division, then passing through, stirred up the ruckus.

The municipal laundry was a never-ending wonder. In this pavilion-like structure built at the edge of the river, French housewives would do the family laundry. Clothes were soaked with

water and laid on flat stones, beaten with paddles, turned from time to time and beaten again. If available, soap was used, but only cold water. Along with the beating went a rapid flow of conversation as village gossip was exchanged. The writer stood by one time for a half hour and frequently heard the name "American soldat." We must have provided the good wives with plenty of good conversational topics. Along with many others the writer found an old refugee woman who did laundry for us. We furnished soap and cigarettes and the charges were reasonable. The laundress's husband spoke very good English and his seventy years made him an authority on the history of northern France, particularly that of Alsace-Lorraine. The Germans had captured his farm and ruined the trees and buildings and he did not like them at all. He had lost a son in the war and he well remembered the Franco-Prussian war when his own father had been made a prisoner at Sedan. He hated the "Bosche" beyond all comprehension.

Several small villages lay in the vicinity of Abainville, among them Bonnet and Houdlancourt, and a rabbit story concerning the former appears later in this narrative. Herb Jenny and his wood detail became well acquainted with the countryside and villages in pursuit of their duties which gave them plenty of opportunity for joy riding. Domremy, famous as the home of Joan of Arc, heroine of France, was not far distant and frequently visited by American soldiers. Fred Radikopf relates an amusing incident of how he went briefly into business as a result of his visit to Domremy. Everything in the famous home was nailed down or fenced in to prevent souvenir hunters from carrying it away. On his return from the place Fred found a few sticks that he fashioned into "authentic relics" and had a brisk sale until his joke was discovered.

Late September and October were pleasant from a weather standpoint. With the advent of late fall and winter, rain was a daily visitor and mud an ever-present nuisance. In addition to fatigue clothes provided for work, rubber boots were issued to all men whose duties carried them away from the few hard roads and pathways. On the morning of September 23 we were drawn up in company formation and briefly addressed by Captain Cannon who outlined in general our duties and sent us to the shops for specific assignment. An Engineer's drawing of the Abainville shops and yard layout appears in the Regimental Biography and cannot be reproduced here. The yard area extended from our barracks two or three hundred yards to the shops and to the right and left of them. The yards further extended beyond the highway leading to Gondrecourt and in them were stored new rolling stock, old stock awaiting repair, and captured German equipment, mostly useless. A spur from the standard gauge ran through the yards and an old 1880 model locomotive of Belgian origin and taken from the Germans served the spur and delivered goods to be transferred to the narrow gauge. Loading platforms assisted in making transfers. Huge stacks of narrow-gauge track lay in stock piles awaiting transportation to the front areas where the Meuse-Argonne offensive was in the making and where most of the 21st Engineers were on assignment. We were working temporarily with the 23rd and 22nd.

The Abainville shops were forty kilometers from St. Mihiel and

were set up for the purpose of assembling, storing, and repairing light railway locomotives, tractors, cars, etc. Companies 12 and 13 of the First Motor Mechanics broke ground on April 24, 1918, for the main track to the shops, and on May 1 actual construction began. Concentration of German troops on the St. Mihiel front caused a cessation of activities and buildings already erected were mined, preparatory to their destruction in case of a German advance, and plans made for moving the plant further to the rear. On July 27 construction and operations were resumed and continued without interruption until the armistice was signed. After that time only running repairs were made. (Regimental Biography - Page 73)

The plant, when construction ceased, covered approximately ninety acres, being made up of the following units: a high-duty pumping station on the bank of the Ornain River, a tributary of the Meuse, which comprised two motor-driven centrifugal pumps of 5000 gallons per hour capacity, one for emergency use only. Water was pumped 3500 feet through a pipe line to a concrete reservoir of 130,000 gallons capacity, constructed on the hillside above, from where water was distributed for general use throughout the plant. A drinking-water plant consisting of twenty-two wells, with one three-plunger, five horse-power, motor-driven pump raising water into a water tower of 20,000 capacity was constructed. (Regimental Biography - Page 73)

Further excerpts from the Biography describe in detail the power plant, the superintendent's office, the drafting room, the store room, the planing mills, carpenter and pattern shops, the machine and repair shops, and the car shop. Other excerpts describe the erecting and repair shop for steam locomotives and one for tractors. The greatest number of steamers assembled in one day was nine, and tractors six. Smith and boiler shops were housed in a separate steel building. The oil house was of steel and the roundhouse a wooden frame and sheet-iron structure. Several traveling cranes used for various purposes were located in the shops and yards; the story of one of them appears in this narrative. The Third and Fourth Battalions and Company O, 21st Engineers moved into Abainville shortly after Company N's arrival, Companies G, N, and O, remaining until after April 1, 1919.

On September 26 Company N men received the sad news that First Lieutenant Hunter McClure had died in the hospital at Neuf-Château. Lieutenant McClure was highly respected throughout the Company and in every way was a gentleman's gentleman. Private Caimelo Chillemi died on February 2, 1919. Insofar as the writer knows, there were no other casualties.

Skilled mechanics made up most of Company N's personnel. Assignments were made where special needs were apparent and other than necessary help in office, kitchen, and barracks maintenance, all hands were soon at work in the shops. Having no training in the field of mechanics, the writer drew a temporary job drying sand for locomotives and was soon transferred to the yard supply room where he issued tools, oil, gas, and accessories to outgoing rail crews and checked on return of tools and amount of supplies used. This assignment continued until he was transferred to England on March 3,

1919. The supply room assignment called for duty from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. A kitchen supplied food to night workers and night life in the railroad yards was a most interesting and novel experience. It was broken only once when the writer was suddenly drafted to serve as fireman on a steamer when the regular man showed up intoxicated and there were no reserves left: the Meuse-Argonne offensive was calling up all equipment and every man available was being pressed into service. The intoxicated fireman was not a Company N man and later faced court-martial. The writer was totally ignorant of firing locomotives but with the engineer's help we managed to reach our destination. Coming back was a different story; water ran low and the locomotive jumped the track. We deadheaded back and saw the engine later in the shops waiting for repairs. Just how locomotives and cars stayed on those jerry-built tracks we have never been able to understand, with all the bumps, turns. dips, and breaks, in which they abounded.

A few Company N men worked in rail operations, the most colorful and flamboyant being Pvt. Frank Carroll, an oldtimer in railroading and numerous other trades. After the armistice and slowdown in the shops, men were transferred to military police and other duties. The late Tom Ash tells of an experience he had when assigned to convoy duty with a train of equipment to a distant part of France. In his own words Tom's story follows:

"I went on a convoy once and had a standard-gauge engine and train loaded with narrow-gauge engines and cars to take across France. I had a tent pitched on the back end of a standard-gauge car loaded two high with narrow-gauge flatcars. They sent me down over one of the bumps one night and I was asleep in my tent. My car hit some other cars with a bang and I jumped up and there was the top flatcar's pair of wheels hanging over my tent. Had it not been for a good kingpin in the centering device of the wheels I would have been killed. I had quite an experience making that trip. You know how strict army red tape is and I had positive instructions not to let any of my equipment get away from me. When I reached my destination I had nothing left but the car I was on. After checking round I found that all my stuff had arrived ahead of me, and I was sure glad."

During the Meuse-Argonne drive our days were filled with activities, and nights too. There was enough time off to permit a minimum of relaxation and rest. Food was plain but substantial, and mess sergeant Petrie and our cooks did their best with what was given them. Good old Ben Duff, he always saw to it that the writer had a good breakfast as he knew that he was working on the night shift and would come in hungry. The writer never had the heart to tell Ben about the midnight snack at the all-night kitchen where sometimes steaks were available until the alcoholic cook was caught drinking the extracts and was fired. A mystery still remains, from whence cameth the steaks? A.W.O.L. from his barracks, one of our demoted sergeants tried eating at the midnight mess and was promptly kicked out by the new cook; the old one had permitted such intrusions; the two had been drinking companions in a not so far away cafe.

The armistice brought a slowdown in work and an increase in time off and relaxation. Troop movements through Abainville, always a thing of interest, changed direction. Ration trains made their regular runs but others gradually reduced to a necessary minimum. Traveling shows came to perform in the "Y" and boxing activities were speeded up and we saw many good bouts with much betting among spectators. During the busy weeks when plant construction was nearing completion, Company N furnished a steeplejack for work on the smokestack. "Molly" Mallory, the only jack in the Regiment managed to make a deal whereby he was allowed a stiff drink before ascending, arguing that without spirit fortification he could not summon nerve enough to go up. The stack had to go up and "Molly" won the argument. Herb Jenny tells how an inaccurate rivet tosser set fire to the roof; and in a cafe later a youthful private thought he had been shot when struck by a popped champagne cork. Now we will hear from George Haberman in his own words telling the story of the crane.

Says George: "Nothing happened until the twenty-ton Bay City crane came into camp. Six of us were assigned to this crane and Sergeant Jones (remember him) was placed in charge and a few days were required for assembling it. We took the crane up on the main road to do some work and it was dark when we started back to camp. The grade from the railroad was a bit hilly and Jones decided we had better see if the crane could be stopped. It stopped, as good cranes should when commanded by a sergeant. 'Now,' said the intrepid Jones, 'here we go.' Soon again boomed the voice of command, 'Everybody jump, I can't stop it.' It was pitch-dark and we all jumped and no one was hurt. The crane collided with a German engine and both were badly damaged.

"The crane was soon repaired and we went back up the hill to unload a stone crusher. We had to put the rail clamp on and pull out the side bars and brace them up as we hooked onto the stone crusher. Jones picked up the crusher, turned it a fourth of the way round, to put it down on blocks. He stopped one foot from the blocks and everything seemed to be going perfectly. Everything seemed to happen at once. The boom started to bend, the rail clamps broke, the bracing on the side let go, and down came the crane, crusher, and all. The crane was again laid up for repairs but we soon had it going again.

"Our next call had us going out to the road to help clean up a wreck of a French train where cars had been derailed near the highway crossing. Three days were required for the job. Several cars were loaded with champagne and the cases and bottles spilled out. We noticed comrades carrying away cases on their shoulders although the cars were supposed to be guarded by soldiers. We all helped ourselves and to avoid detection dropped the bottles in the water tank where some of them broke. Spilled champagne sent our outfit back to camp with a nice smell. We hid the loot under our bunks and it lasted for a few days." Thus endeth the story of the crane but not that of the champagne.

After the passing of forty-five years Company N men individually have forgotten many of the details of life in Abainville; but

no one seems to have forgotten the champagne binge. Apparently the entire camp shared directly or indirectly and official orders came out to restore some semblance of normal operations. Bottles and cases were concealed everywhere, even, the writer was told, under the "Y" floor. The writer during the past two years has received many versions and all agree in general. The writer and twenty some others were on leave in Southern France and heard all about the occurence when they returned to camp a few days later. The writer's bunk had been used as a hiding place and he found one bottle still concealed under the mattress; on the advice of neighbors he turned the bottle over to the supply room where it was taken into custody by Sergeant Basham; where it went from there is a mystery yet unsolved.

Hugh Dalrymple tells how he and a buddy hid a case in the nearby woods and never retrieved it, fearing military police retribution. Hugh would like very much to learn the buddy's name as he has long since forgotten it. The writer has suggested to Hugh that if he learns the identity of his friend, and if said friend is still living, that the two of them return to Abainville, dig up the contraband, and bring it to the next reunion. Emil Weber still remembers the delicious smell of champagne as it mingled with the hot water of the crane's water tank, and how contents of the undamaged bottles tasted; and how also it affected men not accustomed to the luxury of this fruit of the grape. According to rumors, well founded, the French demanded compensation for the champagne and American authorities levied a like amount for use of the crane.

American soldiers were inveterate souvenir hunters and makers. During the winter months half or more of Company N men began to work on French coins, used shell cases, etc., turning them into all sorts of shapes and in many cases into real works of art. Tools began to absent themselves from the shops until an actual shortage developed. And so the great shakedown. On a Sunday morning all hands were ordered to stand inspection at their bunks. Accompanied by officers, non-coms passed with boxes and all who had tools not their own were told to drop them in pronto. Bunks were inspected and the boxes left the barracks well filled. A later order forbade defacing French coins. The late Harvey Johnson was an expert souvenir maker and he, along with others, solved the shortage of tools by purchase wherever available.

As before stated, food was plain but substantial during the closing weeks of fighting at the front. Thanksgiving Day late in November marked a change in rations that saw a greater degree of variety. Christmas and New Year's presented us with real feasts and our presents from home arrived on December 27. The New Year was cause of much celebrating. Early in the day pay was brought up to date, and card and dice games soon were in full progress as always following payday. Other celebrants visited cafes and by late evening there was plenty of noise. Some out of bounds shooting took place and according to Fred Radikopf the smokestack was the target. The writer was on duty in the yard supply room and objects that sounded suspiciously like bullets rattled off the metal roof. Occupants did not venture outside until the barrage ceased.

The news of armistice signing came to us in the yards during the night and was announced next morning officially. "When do we go home" was voiced by every man in camp and General Pershing himself could give no definite answer when he came to inspect early in the spring. According to Herb Jenny and Adrian Bode all was "spit and polish" when the famed Commander arrived and passed through each company. Company commanders were besieged by applications for early discharge with all sorts of reasons appended. One ex-sergeant in his cups pondered striking, alleging that his term of enlistment was up.

Basketball games played in the "Y" drew much interest and following. Early in January our first leave contingent left for Nîmes in Southern France by way of Paris. Included in the group were sergeants King and Basham, Emery Kintzler, Walter Seiler, Andrew O'Brien, James Hazzlet, Arthur Moore, and Ross McCandless. Other names are not readily available. The writer was a member of the contingent and thoroughly enjoyed himself, as did all the others. We played baseball in the old Roman Arena in Nîmes, visited the famed Cathedral City of Arles, and Avignon where popes once ruled for a century. The writer well remembers his twenty-fourth birthday, January 20, which came during the sojourn in Nîmes. Hugh Dalrymple recalls vividly his leave spent in Mentone and a short visit across the Italian border with Vollmer and Ferrario for a visit with the latter's relatives. According to Hugh, breakfast in bed at the Excelsior Hotel was a luxury to which soldiers and coal miners were unaccustomed.

And so the winter and early spring wore on. The writer left the Company on March 3, and he is ever grateful to Lieutenant Bruckman for recommending him for University assignment, and to Lieutenant Soderstrom for his interest in final preparations; and to Corporal Jenny and Sergeant Basham who on short notice checked equipment and supplied things needed. The writer will never forget the kindness and consideration of fellow soldiers as they bade him Godspeed. The writer arrived in England on March 5 and left on July 5 after a session in London University and having made use of all travel privileges possible. Returning to Brest in a Casual Company, passage to New York was made in the Dutch liner Rotterdam and discharge came on July 26 in Camp Mills, Long Island.

Improvement in weather brought outdoor activities and drill. Baseball grounds were prepared, teams and leagues organized, and a full program of sports scheduled. Hugh Dalrymple's pitching was responsible for putting Walt Seiler out of commission as catcher for one team. Bill Bruckman's first basing was of big-league caliber, and others distinguished themselves for batting or fielding prowess, or both. The last game was played at Brest as Company N men awaited final sailing orders. Walt Seiler tells how his adventures in an ivy-infested place gave him a spreading attack of poisoning that did not entirely subside until he had returned to his home, where the folk recognized him notwithstanding.

Company N stopped in Le Mans for several days on the way to Brest. Delousing ruined the neat appearance of new uniforms recently issued and a similar occurrence after arriving in the United

States compounded the ruin. The homeward journey began in May and the Company arrived in New York on June 22. Officers and men were bitterly disappointed when they found that the accumulated mess fund could not be brought to the States for a final banquet there. To the surprise of all, the Great Northern furnished transportation on the return journey. A delay ensued in Brest when a few celebrators lined up empty wine bottles in barracks corridors where they tripped up the officer of the day when he came to inspect. The matter was settled amicably when a man in the Company went to see his brother who was in the transportation office. A few of the men including Herb Jenny and Dewey Leasure had been sent to the hospital and returned later in Casual companies. Shortly after June 22 the Company was disbanded and men sent for discharge to camps nearest points of enlistment. The final gong had sounded for Company N.

Company N was a good outfit and was a representative cross section of American citizenry. We fought no battles at the front and killed no Germans; but we did contribute to the final drive that brought victory by working on the transportation lines that mean so much in waging modern warfare. We did not have direct contact with 21st Headquarters and did not experience the personal command and inspiration of Colonel Peak and Lieutenant Colonel Hiram Slifer whose memories are so dear to the First Four Battalions; but we did know from personal experience what it meant to be around Colonel Sam Robertson. We were well led, and ably so, by our own officers who took so much personal interest in our welfare.

Company N was not composed of snobs, just common and ordinary men of ability and bearing. Mischief there was at times but not of the vicious kind that wounds and hurts. Every man was the other man's friend when chips were down. The writer treasures his memories of men and officers and is now thoroughly enjoying the correspondence that has lately sprung into being among comrades of long ago. The writer recently learned that one of our number, Jasper Lambert, after discharge received a citation for meritorious service, and wrote for details. Jasper replied as follows: "Sorry to hear about the fellows who died, Joe Hanacheck was my buddy and King was in my squad. The citation I received in April was mailed to me at home. Major Stevens of Hdq. Co. 22nd Engineers must have recommended me. Believe it or not, I was the big wheel in the construction of the power house." --Lambert.

Yes, there still remains the stories of Fred Radikopf, Tony Pilgrim, Bevo, and the rabbit. Fred tells the stories so well that they appear in his own words as an epilogue of this narrative.

A Rabbit Supper in a French Home

By Fred Radikopf - Company N, 21st Engineers

Tony Pilgrim and I were invited to a French home for supper. The family lived in Bonnet, a village about five kilometers from Abainville where our headquarters were located. Tony told me that he had been in this home and that the family was very fond of army white bread. We went to our mess sergeant and drew our bread rations for the day and then started to walk to Bonnet.

After starting on our trek Tony informed me that Algerian soldiers were billeted in the town and we argued a bit on the advisability of returning to our quarters for our side arms. We decided against returning and proceeded on our way although I must admit I was scared and I believe the same could be said for Tony. The road we were traveling was made of crushed white limestone and when about a kilometer from Bonnet I had the scare of my life.

Hearing a noise behind us I looked over my shoulder and saw approaching rather rapidly, a dark object showing up against the white roadway. My first thoughts were that Algerians were pursuing and that Tony should be warned. I intended to shove him to the side of the road but instead of so doing jumped right on his shoulders. We both went down and Tony started to swing his fists at me. Just then we heard a voice saying "hello" and the speaker proved to be a boy twelve years old and the son of the family with whom we were to dine, and he was riding a bicycle. The boy had been sent to look for us as it was getting dark and a roast rabbit had been prepared.

We arrived at the place and were very hungry and ready to eat. We were seated at the table and supper was served. After eating a little, Tony asked for a glass of wine and he downed it in one gulp and asked for another. The second glass went down too in a gulp and he asked for still another. Said Tony, "Fred, I am not hungry. I will meet you outside," and out he went. I knew this was not true since we had not eaten and had had a long walk; something must be wrong, so I excused myself and followed. I found him sick and heaving. When I inquired what was the matter Tony replied, "Fred, that was no rabbit; that was a cat." When I told him that he must be mistaken he replied, "That is what I expected you to say, so here is proof. Not only was that animal a cat, but they left the head on and I have saved the jawbone," and said the stricken Tony, "Look at that large tooth; you never saw a rabbit with teeth like that!" I became sick immediately and tried to outdo Tony on the heaving job. We surely were a couple of sick Company N boys, and tired as well.

I have never eaten rabbit since eating the cat, and I do not think I ever will eat one.

Fred Radikopf

Editor's note: In an accompanying letter Fred says that to this day he hates cats.

The Little Dog That Went to War

By Fred Radikopf - Company N, 21st Engineers

This is the story of my dog Bevo. While soldiering in Camp A.A. Humphreys, Virginia, we had a weekend off duty and went to Washington, D.C. Returning to Camp we stopped in Arlington and there met a little boy with a small dog who offered it to us, saying that he only asked us to take good care of it. That would be pay enough. I hitchhiked back to Camp; the dog was mine and I named him Bevo. The sergeant informed me that I could not keep the dog and he was sent to the guardhouse and there was named Rusty. What could I do? I was only a private soldier and in no position to argue with a sergeant.

Every day when I had an opportunity to do so, I went over to the guardhouse to feed and play with my dog. Presently a call went out for a man to volunteer for service in the kitchen as a cook. This was my chance to secure food for my dog. I volunteered and served in the kitchen for three months and the dog was well cared for. I was called out of ranks one morning and sent to mechanical school; now I thought I would at least learn something. Reporting to a lieutenant, I was sent to a garage, reporting there to a Sergeant Sullivan, but did not see any cars or anything else of a mechanical nature. A crew was working on a cement floor and the sergeant ordered me to start carrying cement to the mixer, the job lasting all day.

On the day following I was promoted to carrying water and I had to go about two blocks to the water supply, bring back two pails and empty them in a large barrel. Needless to say, I could not keep up and soon the mixer had no water. A lieutenant came along and observing that all hands were loafing, inquired what was causing the delay. "No water," was the reply. "Where is the water detail," said the lieutenant. Said I, "Here, sir," and he immediately inquired as to where the others might be. When he found that I was the whole detail he laughed and said, "I will fix that quickly," and left us. Returning in about ten minutes, he brought with him a whole company of men armed with pails and I lost my job.

My next job was wheeling cement from the mixer along with three other men. We used "irish chariots" and the men running the mixer would trip the thing in such a way as to cause some of the mixture to splash on us, a big joke as we had to stand inspection at retreat every night. I met a cement finisher who said he needed a helper, and at his suggestion, the sergeant detailed me to the job. The finisher turned out to be Edgar Acker, who was later transferred to Company N and I soon followed him.

Camp Belvoir, where Company N was being organized and trained, was about two miles from Humphreys and I found myself in real trouble. My dog was still in the guardhouse in Humphreys, not too far away, so I went back long enough to get him and the sergeant of the 2nd

Training Regiment raised a big fuss about it. The Camp newspaper carried a front-page story about someone stealing Rusty; but I had him safely in Belvoir. I was assigned to a tent and kept Bevo in an old valise used by him for sleeping purposes. The next morning when we stood reveille, Bevo came out and Captain Cannon, our commanding officer, ordered him banished. The following morning Bevo came out again, and as we were at right dress he walked in front of the line, almost stepping on our toes. Executing an about face the dog marched back again, did a left turn to the center and sat down along side the Captain, in effect saying, "The Company is ready, sir." Bevo won his chevrons right there and became a regular. He was now one of us.

On hikes Bevo was always at the head of the Company. Lieutenant Bruckman delighted in giving the command, "To the rear, march." Finding himself at the rear Bevo would take off for the head of the Company, in his canine mind, his proper place. The lieutenant often gave this command, and poor Bevo was kept busy keeping up. Bevo was stolen back by the men from Humphreys and as many times returned by me. By this time I was company mailman, and had the use of a vehicle for carrying the mail, and the services of a driver. The newspaper always carried stories about Rusty being stolen. These exchanges went on until Company N received orders to go overseas and then Bevo presented another problem; could we take him along? How, I did not know. By this time the dog was a pal of every man in the Company and big Bill Schneyer came to the rescue. "Don't worry," said Bill, "I will take care of the situation."

Bevo went aboard Great Northern under Bill's folded raincoat and so on to France. I kept the dog in my bunk and carried food to him. We landed and marched to Pontanezan, staying there ten days and then early one morning shipped out in the forty and eight Pullmans bound for Abainville and Bevo was still with us. When only a day from our destination some of the men in another car borrowed Bevo to ride with them. The train slowed down and the dog jumped off, a sad day for me. As I later found out, where Bevo left the train another Engineer Company was encamped and he reported to them. Soldiers were the only friends he knew.

Eight months after Bevo's hasty departure from the boxcar and we were on the way home by Brest, we stopped in the city of Issurtille, a place well known to thousands of A.E.F. veterans. We discovered a ball game in progress and the players we observed were engineers. My eyes almost popped out when I saw a yellow dog crossing the playing field. "That looks like Bevo," I said, and a soldier standing nearby asked me to what outfit I belonged. I replied that I was a member of Company N, 21st Light Railway Engineers; and then he told me how the dog came to them as they were standing reveille, lined up with the Company, and won a new home for himself. This man overheard our plotting to steal Bevo and asked us not to go through with it. He explained that a soldier from Pennsylvania in his Company had taken care of Bevo and had gone to all the trouble of getting shots needed for permission to take him to the United States, and that they were now homeward bound. I could not give the dog more than his present owners were giving him, so I

replied that it was O.K. with me, and so it was that Bevo who went with us to war was safely returned.

Editor's note: This is one of the best human interest dog stories I have ever encountered. A man who would volunteer to work three months in a military kitchen in order to feed his dog deserves a medal of honor.

Addendum

Bruce R. DeBolt
5625 NW 137th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97229
bruce.debolt@comcast.net

December 1, 2011

Dear Henry & Rosemary,

I'm enclosing something I hope you will find to be interesting, warm and inspiring. It's a project I have been working on for a number of years: transcribing and annotating the letters and commentary compiled by Gilbert Roberts about his experiences in World War I.

The transcribing part was easy. Uncle Gilbert himself transcribed all of the letters he had sent home in 1918 and 1919, which his mother had kept. He added "in between the lines" commentary, explaining some things censorship would not permit during the war, when he prepared the memoir in 1967. The manuscript is impeccable, which we would expect from an accomplished historian and educator. David Roberts had two copies of the original manuscript, and he was gracious enough to share one of them with me.

The annotating has been the challenging and fun part. What I have wanted to do is to help explain how Private Roberts's experience fits into the broader context of the Great War. Where did he serve? How did his unit's role fit into the war effort? What was going on around him? There is no way a private in the army engineers can tell that story from the front. Sometimes it takes even more years than the participants themselves are allotted, to explain what was happening, and why.

This report was supposed to come to you before this year's Thanksgiving. The segment of Private Roberts's letters in this document is from just before and after Thanksgiving 1918. Alas, there were elements of the production (transporting photos from one medium to another) that I had trouble figuring out how to do. But here it is, best I can do.

My memories of Thanksgiving from childhood focus on Grandfather and Grandmother DeBolt's farm near Fredericktown, or on the Roberts home at 1716 Chestnut Blvd. in Cuyahoga Falls. Uncle Gilbert and Aunt Helen were my third set of grandparents. I spent many hours at their home between age 4 and 11, playing Pegity with Aunt Helen, lining up Uncle Gilbert's collection of lead soldiers, and listening raptly to his stories. At least I thought they were stories: I found out soon enough that they were real history, told so that later generations would understand, appreciate and cherish them. No doubt he had told these same stories to his students at Falls High, and they had loved them, and him.

You will see in the story that there is a hint of a sequel. Private Roberts's service and time abroad was not over when the Armistice was signed. Maybe sometime next year.

Best wishes for the rest of the holiday season.

Bruce

Enclosure

Thanksgiving 1918

Excerpted from:

LETTERS AND RECOLLECTIONS of GILBERT ROBERTS, 21st Engineers, Company N (Lt. Rail)

WORLD WAR I

Remembering the best
and
Forgetting the worst.

May 27, 1918 to July 26, 1919

IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE
Dedicated to
THE MOTHER WHO SAVED THE LETTERS
and
THE GRANDMOTHER WHO WAITED

"Abainville, France, November 24, 1918
"Speaking about Thanksgiving sends my thoughts homeward again. I never missed being at home for that day and I sincerely hope that this will be the last I spend away. This should be a great Thanksgiving for the American people, commemorating as it does the end of the war and deliverance from hardships and long hours of waiting."

***

"I won't be able to look an honest cow or pig in the face without a guilty feeling for a long time."

Introduction

Private Roberts

Gilbert Roberts grew up on a farm near Fredericktown, Knox County, Ohio. As the Great War started to draw in the United States, he was eager to serve. He tried to enlist in the Marines and later the Navy in 1917, but he was rejected due to congenital flat feet. So he went back to school and waited for the draft.

Eventually Gilbert reported for duty in the U.S. Army in May 1918, upon his graduation from Kent State Normal College (now Kent State University) in Ohio. On the day he and 200 other men embarked from Mount Vernon, Knox County, for Camp Sherman near Chillicothe, among

those present to see them off was Gilbert's grandfather Wilbur Foote (1838-1924), a veteran of the Civil War who had marched with Sherman in the Atlanta campaign and the March to the Sea.

When Gilbert filled out his Army personnel card, he indicated that he knew something about photography. Probably due to this factor, he was transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers and relocated to Camp A. A. Humphreys in Virginia (now Fort Belvoir), not far from Washington, D.C. In late June he was assigned to Company N, 21st Army Engineers.

The 21st Engineers had little or nothing to do with photography: The regiment was responsible for the construction and operation of the light (narrow gauge) railways that would transport troops and material to the front in the American sector not far from Verdun. Indeed, many of the original officers and men in the unit had been recruited from America's railroad industry.

Despite hard work and the miserable climate of northern Virginia, by July Gilbert had grown to "like the army and especially the Engineers Corps. A spirit existed in the Corps that is not found elsewhere and its members are proud to wear the 'castle' emblem."

After the considerable hard work and tedium of training, Gilbert Roberts's unit took the train to Hoboken in late August 1918 and embarked on a troop transport, the *Great Northern*, to France.

Gilbert's mother and grandmother kept the letters he wrote from France, which were warmly descriptive despite ever-present army censorship. After returning to Ohio in 1919 and devoting a 41-year career to teaching and public school administration in Cuyahoga Falls, he transcribed the letters and added reflective commentary in a manuscript completed on February 1, 1967. He died in 1978; Roberts Elementary (now Middle) School in Cuyahoga Falls was named in his honor.

What follows is a short segment of Gilbert Roberts's letters, and his later commentary relating to the days just before and after Thanksgiving in November 1918. Then, in an afterword, I will attempt to place Private Roberts's experience in the broader context of the Great War.

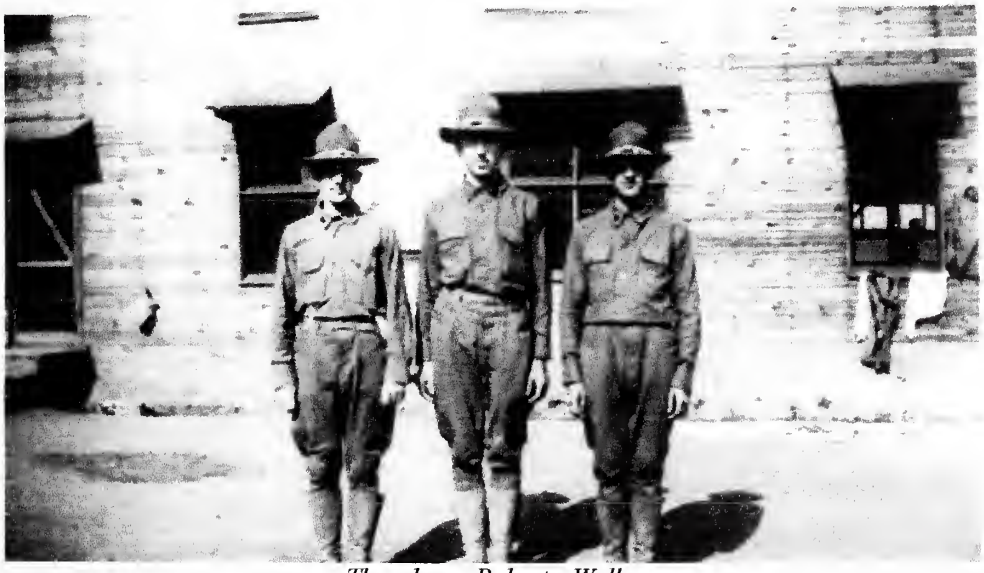
Somewhere in France, November 16, 1918

Dear Folks: -- This is Saturday, one of the many and fast-flying days between us and home. Time moves much more rapidly than I thought it would.
***

I am well as usual and have not felt better for a long time. My life in the army has been a great benefit to me, I know. The weather has been damp for several days and colder than usual. We have been

issued plenty of winter clothing, and I am comfortable. I did not get back the sweater Aunt Libby [Gilbert's mother's sister, Elizabeth Foote (1872-1956)] *knit for me, but I did draw one that is well made and warm. We are well fed and have comfortable quarters so I have no complaints to register. Nevertheless we have a few chronic knockers, there are those everywhere, who expect Hotel Deshler*[1] *luxuries, etc. It is sometimes amusing and sometimes disgusting to hear these fellows sound off.*

The thing we are most interested in now is: "When do we go home?" Whenever a group gets together, the subject comes up within ten minutes. Some will be lucky enough to be first; and, of course, someone will be last. It looks to me as though the boys who came over first should go home first. At any rate the army will get us home as soon as possible.



Thornburg, Roberts, Welker
Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio
May 30, 1918.[2]

What did you think of the way in which the Kaiser wound up his affairs? The Ohio boys in the

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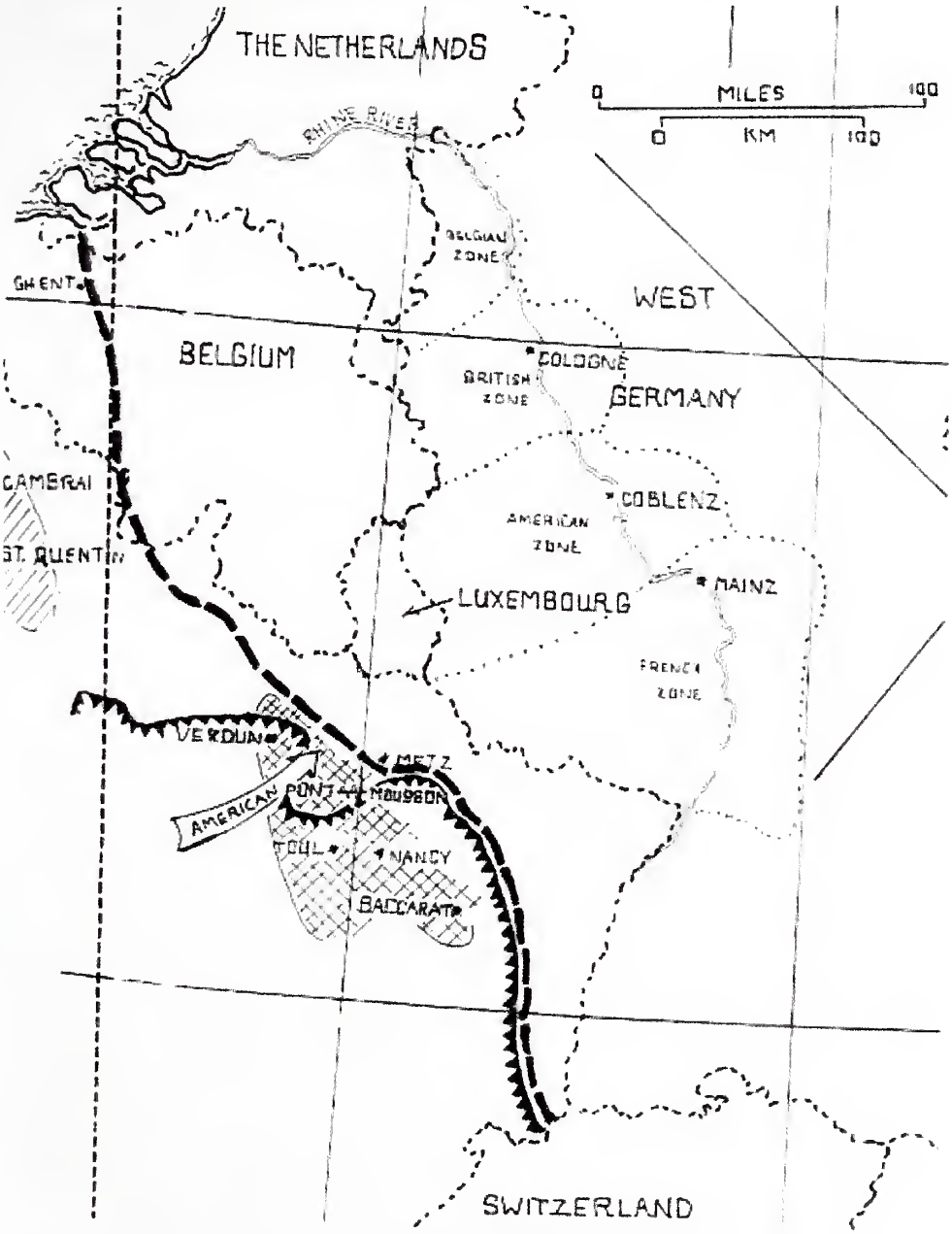
[1] The Hotel Deshler was a luxury hotel in Columbus, Ohio, that was built just before the World War I. It was demolished as obsolete in 1970.
[2] Source: Roberts, Gilbert. *Letters and Recollections* (1918-19, 1967).

*Rainbow Division took their share of honors and Harry Randall's regiment, the old Ohio [*National Guard*] 42nd, was right on the job at the capture of Sedan. I will send you a copy of* <u>*Stars and Stripes*</u> *and you can read it for yourselves.*



Northwest Europe showing the areas in which U.S. Light Railway troops served 1917-1918.[3]

[3] Source: Dunn, Richard. *Narrow Gauge to No Man's Land: U.S. Army 60 cm Gauge Railways of the First World War in France.* Los Altos, CA: Benchmark Publications, 1990. Map 2-3, page 12.

I have studied a lot of history and have never heard of an armistice whose terms were more exacting than the one accepted by Germany. It is the best safeguard possible for the future.

You asked me in one letter where I landed in France. We landed at Brest, and you can find it on any good map of Europe. We do not know where we will go to embark for home. I can get aboard as quickly as anyone wherever we go. I am willing to put up with most anything to get back under Dad's roof again.

Must close and get moving again. Love to all,
Gilbert

Without meaning to be such, I became the oil-house authority on French and European history. The shack housed "authorities" of all kinds, and many were the practical but harmless jokes perpetrated by masters in that field. Americans are experts in scrounging, and various and sundry tidbits of food found their way to our midnight table.

Somewhere in France, November 20, 1918

Dear Grandmother: -- It is quite cold this afternoon, and the weather is much like that of Thanksgiving time in Ohio. We have had no snow yet, and we are told that snow is not plentiful during winters here. I am sitting at a writing table in the "Y" close by a warm coal fire, which is another pleasant reminder of home. Fuel is so scarce in France that people do with very little heat. The mining regions were in German hands during the fighting, and wood is not as plentiful as at home. Uncle Sam provides coal for the "Y" from his stock, and it is worth sixty dollars per ton.

The French are a patient lot to endure for four years all they have gone through. Everywhere one sees women and children doing men's work, able-bodied men being in the army. We see people cultivating land that at home would be left idle, and

they do know how to raise vegetables. They do not live on their farms as we do at home, but live in little villages, going out to their fields each day in their old-fashioned two-wheel carts.

When a farmer here wishes to hitch two or three horses to a wagon, he does it by placing one ahead of the other rather than abreast as we do. Usually people, horses, cows, and chickens are housed under the same roof. Fields are very small and usually unfenced. The country hereabouts is rolling and of the hill-and-valley type. The soil is a sticky clay and underlaid with a sort of chalk subsoil. During muddy weather walking is difficult.

Each village has its church, town hall or Mairie, a few shops, and its old-fashioned houses, many dating back to the time of Columbus. This part of France is known as Lorraine, and a part of it was taken by the Germans in 1871 and recently retaken largely through the efforts of American soldiers. I would like to visit the many historic places in which France abounds and perhaps I can. One must have been here four months to qualify for a fourteen-day furlough. And we might be leaving here before the four months pass; who knows?

I hope your Thanksgiving will be a pleasant one and this year we all have much for which we are truly thankful, or should be. Love to all,

Gilbert

An order came out setting November 24 as a general letter-writing day and we were told to write "Dad" a Christmas letter. Censorship was relaxed, and we were permitted to say where we were and give other details formerly forbidden. The following letter is self explanatory.

Abainville, France, November 24, 1918
Dad's Christmas Letter

Dear Dad: -- Doubtless you have heard through the papers of the scheme making November 24 a great letter-writing day for soldiers of the A.E.F. Letters to the fathers. It is a fine plan, and for the first time the censorship is lifted and we are permitted to give details heretofore under the ban.

I have had no mail this week but am expecting some tomorrow. No papers have come for several weeks. I am well and feeling fine. The weather this week has been ideal, the nights clear and frosty and the days sunshiny and pleasant. It resembles Ohio weather at Thanksgiving time. Speaking about Thanksgiving sends my thoughts homeward again. I never missed being at home for that day and I sincerely hope that this will be the last I spend away. This should be a great Thanksgiving for the American people, commemorating as it does the end of the war and deliverance from hardships and long hours of waiting. For my part I am thankful that I am alive and soon to return to my home and place in civil life.

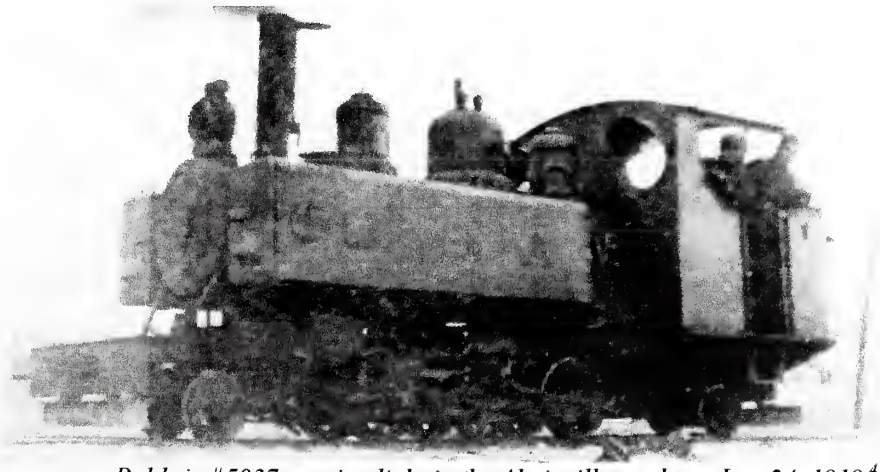
As far as coming home is concerned, we know nothing. Our company has been lucky so far, and we are hoping our good luck continues. The great topic of discussion now is that of going home. If we learn nothing else than a sense of appreciation of home and country, much good will have been accomplished. It seems to me now that the slackers and draft dodgers would begin to see wherein they were cowardly and weak. I cannot conceive of C--- C--- being able to look a returned soldier in the face.

Now for a few details that I know will interest you. We sailed from New York, or properly speaking, from Hoboken on August 31 on the transport Great Northern. There were three ships in the convoy,

Northern Pacific and Leviathan being the other two. The last named was formerly a German liner (Vaterland) and is the largest ship afloat. The only incident worth mentioning was the destruction of a submarine by a depth bomb near our ship. A depth bomb makes a big stir when it goes off.

We landed at Brest, France, on September 8 and were stationed in a "rest" camp for ten days. While there, we stayed in Napoleon's old barracks. From Brest we traveled in a zigzag way across France, missing Paris by a few miles, until we arrived at our present camp near the village of Abainville, which is in French Lorraine. We are some forty or fifty miles from Metz and closer than that to the front. The American army held the Lorraine front and extended over a line of fifty-two miles. The Rainbow Division has been placed in the army of occupation.

Our camp is headquarters for the narrow-gauge railway system that runs all along the front. There are several shops here, foundries, machine, etc. Here all the dinky engines, steam and gasoline, are put into service. Cars are built here by the hundreds for service. Rolling stock in need of repairs is brought here to the shops. I have worked with the roundhouse force ever since coming here.



Baldwin #5037 running light in the Abainville yards on Jan. 24, 1919.[4]

[4] Source: Dunn, page 88.

For a few weeks I had charge of the sandhouse and was hostler for a standard-gauge engine used in the yards. I learned to run both standard-gauge and narrow-gauge locomotives, steam or gasoline propelled. My next job was a promotion to clerk in the oil supply room where I am now working.[5] We have eight-hour shifts now, mine being from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. I have charge of oil, tools, coal, and sand, handling the oil and tools myself. There is much accounting work to be done; every pound of coal and every pint of oil, and all tools must be accounted for at any hour of day. The coal men keep checks on all amounts issued and turn the slips over to me for recording. All requisitions for coal and oil not for engines have first to be signed by the supply officer. Coal here is worth sixty dollars per ton and is constantly kept under guard. So well guarded is it that a green guard not recognizing me one night, arrested me when I went out for coal for our stove. I had to produce proof before he would let me go. (A good joke on me!)

We have good times around my shack. The yardmen when waiting for engines come in to sit by the stove, and one cannot get lonesome. Sometimes we buy French bread and steak, broiling the latter over the coals. We make coffee in a clean tallow pot and have a general good time. The army is not all hardship by any means, and I have never felt better in my life, nor weighed more. I have each Monday off duty.

I am trying to get a pass to go to Verdun, which is about seventy-five miles away. Domremy, birthplace of Joan of Arc, is ten miles away. We may not be in France long enough to get our fourteen-day furlough, four months of service being required to qualify.

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[5] See Map 3-5 on page 25. Source: Dunn, page 57. The "Oil House" in the Shops and Yard at Abainville is just south of center.

I received a letter from [Gilbert's cousin] Wilber Foote and he is about 100 miles from here, closer to the front or where the front used to be. Earl [Welker] and [Frank] Thornburg are much farther away than is Wilber. I do not expect to see them this side of the Atlantic unless it be by accident.

Wilber Foote is no longer a first sergeant, having been transferred, and now is a platoon sergeant. Wilber did well in promotion. Over here a private draws $33 per month, a first-class private $36, a corporal $39, and sergeants range from $42 to $56. Had I continued in the non-com school I would probably rank higher than private. I am quite content and hope to leave the army as I entered, Private Roberts, and with no black marks against my record.

We have three Knox County men in our company *** and in all we have several from Ohio. We meet men from all over the United States and a few foreign countries. An Australian is working in the yards who spent three years at the front and was wounded six times. We have an Italian in Company N who formerly lived in Argentina.

I suppose I can pick up a job when I get home, but I would like first to put in some time on the farm. So, have the fatted calf ready and a few fatted roosters, etc., etc. I have not tasted chicken since the day they turned me loose from Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. We get plenty to eat but with little variety. We get good beef, but beef once and sometimes twice a day gets tiresome. We get bacon each morning and that gets to be an old story. I won't be able to look an honest cow or pig in the face without a guilty feeling for a long time. Our company feeds well, among the best in camp. We have good bread, all wheat and superior to that we had in the States. But even so, things can become a bit monotonous.

So many parcels have been lost that I will refrain from sending one home. I will carry small stuff I have collected with me. I have a couple of German barrage shells that I am having made into nice souvenir articles.

I have written quite at length this time so will sign off. The things I have told you are only a few of the many I will keep until I return. And then around the "homefires" and with the day drawing to a close we can talk on and on. I did not get to the firing line, but at least I kept my rifle shined up all the time ready, if called, to go. Hope this finds you well and I wish the home folk a very Merry Christmas. Love to all,

Gilbert

The Christmas letter reached its destination promptly. During the fall months the great influenza epidemic killed thousands of people in the United States and elsewhere. In my own community several friends and neighbors died, and my father was gravely ill for weeks. Strict discipline kept the epidemic under control in the army, and with the coming of winter it abated at home and abroad. Influenza killed more people than the war itself.

Abainville, France, November 26, 1918

Dear Folks - I am writing my weekly letter today as usual, the one dated November 24 being a special number. This is my day off and I am putting in the time sleeping, washing clothes, taking a bath, and talking (most of the time) with other night-shift men. I am well, and in fact could not feel better. I had to draw a new coat yesterday as I had gotten too large for the old one. It was too large for me when I drew it at [Camp] *Humphreys.*

I am happy to know you escaped the influenza epidemic. According to reports it must have been bad in the States. I received a Kent paper last night which

gave statistics on cases and deaths in Ohio alone. I also received a letter from President McGilvrey of Kent State, who has not forgotten his former students.

I do not know how long we are to stay in this place. Work is almost finished, and we are scheduled to begin drilling soon to put in the time. Drill will be play in comparison with what we had in Humphreys when the sun was hot enough to boil eggs. Some reports have us going soon, but they are unreliable and I take no stock in them. We will get home sometime and the sooner the better.

The French will take over the place here, and what a place it is! When one considers the time required to put it into operation with shops, yards, etc., where only a few months ago crops were growing, the imagination is staggered.

I am enclosing views of Abainville and Gondrecourt, two villages twenty minutes' walk apart. Gondrecourt is about as large as Fredericktown and Abainville is much smaller. We were not permitted to send such pictures earlier since they might betray to possible enemies the position and identity of troop units.

Do my letters come to you regularly? Since the middle of October letters have been coming regularly here, but papers do not. A short time ago I received from a friend in Kent a rather unique sort of letter. It was a pamphlet made up of cartoons, jokes, and editorials from many leading papers. The pamphlet was entitled "Frown Chaser" and the name was well chosen. Included were two cartoons, "Bringing up Father" and "The Terrible Tempered Mr. Bang." I am faring very well in France and get all news possible from you and my friends. Things here run smoothly and we have lost only one man, Lt. Hunter McClure, who died only a few days after we arrived in Abainville.

This may reach you before Christmas so I will again wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Love to all,

Gilbert

The death of Hunter McClure was a blow that suddenly awakened us to some of the realities of war. McClure was well liked and respected by men and officers alike. During the winter we lost another man, Pvt. Chellemi, whose death resulted from an accident. There were minor illnesses, of course, but insofar as I know only two or three men spent time in hospitals while in Abainville. I left the company in March, 1919, and heard in recent years that two men became ill on the move to Brest and were sent to hospitals. I do know that both returned to the United States at a later time than Company N. For several weeks we had as neighbors in Abainville, Companies G and O of the 21st Engineers.

Abainville, France, November 29, 1918

Dear Folks - Your last two letters came today and I am sorry to hear that Dad is ill with influenza. It is difficult to say how long the epidemic will continue. Our company has escaped with very few cases so far. Several of us have had colds but soon recovered. I have not been on sick report since leaving Brest. I was on report three days in Brest. I hope you have no more cases in the family and elsewhere. The disease is highly communicable and precautions do much to arrest its spreading.

Fredericktown did well in celebrating Armistice Day with a parade lasting an hour. I am glad I saw the simple peasant people of France holding their celebration in our "Y." The national hymn of France, the "Marseillaise" is as sacred to the French as Scripture and we were inspired listening to it rendered, not by a sympathetic audience of Americans, but by war mothers, widows, and orphans.

***

Army life has its drawbacks and inconveniences, but on the whole we are well off. I know you wonder what I am eating. For supper tonight we had brown beans, tomatoes, cooked onions, bread and coffee. Since I have been working nights, I do not eat dinner with the company, but did make an exception Thanksgiving Day. We did not have turkey but did very well with roast beef, cabbage, potatoes, cake, bread, jam, coffee, and cigars. There was a football game in the afternoon, but to get necessary sleep I did not attend.

The long hill to Camp Pontenezan, Brest, France (Akright, Roberts) July 1919.[6]

In the evening our Masonic Club met, initiated a candidate, and had a feed consisting of all the cake we could eat, all the coffee we could drink, and cigars. Our Salvation Army woman, a motherly person of middle age, baked the cake and it reminded us so much of home. The Salvation Army is a great organization and doing work other churches should do. Whenever I pass a Salvation Army meeting in the future, I will contribute to their work.

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[6] Source: Roberts, *Letters and Recollections.*

Must close. Love to all,

Gilbert

MORE****

 [7]

Afterword

Thanksgiving 1918

Private Roberts's Thanksgiving dinner of "roast beef, cabbage, potatoes, cake, bread, jam, coffee, and cigars" may not sound like much to Americans in the warmth of their homes in the 21st century, but to the men of Company N in November 1918 it would have been a glorious feast. With the armistice just two weeks old, there was much to be thankful for. President Woodrow Wilson expressed the sentiment of the occasion in his proclamation of Thanksgiving Day 1918:

> "It has long been our custom to turn in the autumn of the year in praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God for His many blessings and mercies to us as a nation. This year we have special and moving cause to be grateful and to rejoice. God has in His good pleasure given us peace. It has not come as a mere cessation of arms, a mere relief from the strain and tragedy of war. It has come as a great triumph of right. Complete victory has brought us, not peace alone, but the confident promise of a new day as well in which justice shall replace force and jealous intrigue among the nations. Our gallant armies have participated in a triumph which is not marred or stained by any purpose of selfish aggression. ***"

The flush of the "great triumph of right" did not last. When Private Roberts wrote that he had "never heard of an armistice whose terms were more exacting than the one accepted by Germany," he had no inkling of the bitterness of the treaty negotiations to come in 1919, or of the eventual failure of President Wilson's great dream: a League of Nations.

The Light Railways

The American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) included four regiments that specialized in building and operating railroads: the 12th, 14th, 21st and 22nd Army Engineers. The 12th and 14th Engineers arrived in France in August 1917 and were first assigned to standard gauge railways in the British sector. The first two battalions of the 21st Engineers arrived in January 1918; the third and fourth battalions (including Company N) of the

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[7] This is the castle emblem that was and is the symbol of the Army Corps of Engineers. Source: *Report of the Chief Engineer, First Army A.E.F., on the Engineer Operations in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne Offensives, 1918* (U.S. Gov. Printing Office, 1929).

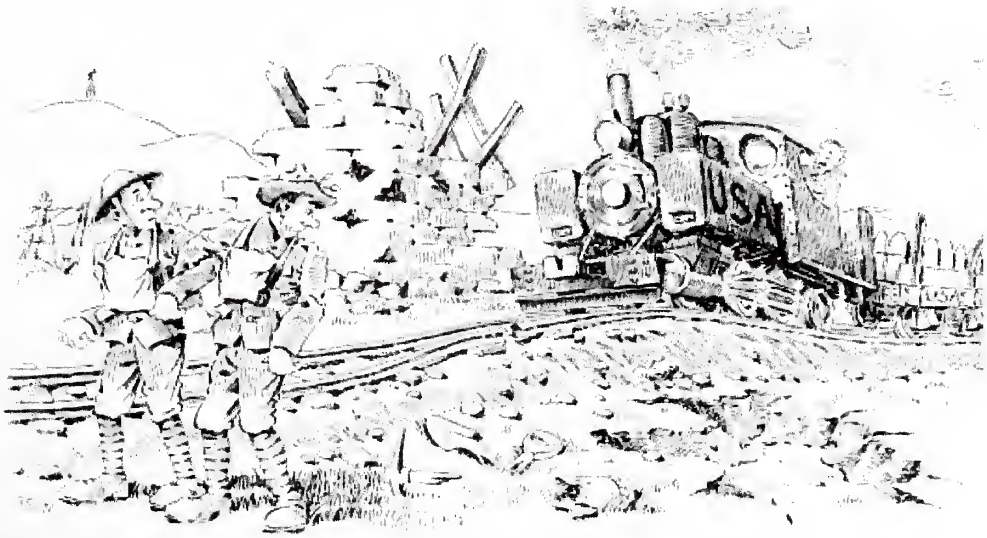
21st Engineers, and the 22nd Engineers, arrived during the summer and early fall. All four regiments eventually specialized in operating the light railways in the American sector in Lorraine. Many of the men in the regiments came from American railroads, with a wide range of traditional railroading skills. Others, including Private Gilbert Roberts, were learning railroading from scratch.

The light railways were a remarkable technology. "Light rail" meant not just light, but really narrow, even narrower than the narrow gauge railroads used in logging and other industrial operations in the U.S. The rails were light-weight and were only about 20 inches apart.

The primary motive power for the American light railways was a steam locomotive, the "2-6-2T" model designed on short notice by the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia. Baldwin built 195 of the engines; 191 of them served in France. They weighed only about 17 tons,[8] and they carried only 476 gallons of water and 1,700 pounds of coal.

In operation, the engines were ungainly and cantankerous. Richard Dunn, who wrote the definitive book on the Army Engineers' light railways, recounted some of their weaknesses:

> "U.S. military engineers could have learned much from shortcomings in the British and French narrow gauge equipment and the way they employed it to supply front line positions. However, the military engineers seemed not to have taken to heart any lessons from others, particularly with respect to equipment design. The Baldwin steam locomotives they ordered couldn't negotiate sharp curves, had a high center of gravity and cabs that were too small."[9]



Drawing by Bert H. Larson (from "An Historical and Technical Biography of the Twenty-first Engineers").[10]

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[8] In contrast, the standard gauge geared engines at the Cass Scenic Railroad in West Virginia weigh 80 to 90 tons.
[9] Dunn, page 86.
[10] Source: Dunn, page 86.

The water tanks mounted on each side of the boilers contributed to their high center of gravity, and to their risk of roll-overs. But the water tanks created other problems even Baldwin might not have been able to anticipate. The light railways were in such constant demand that there was no break for the engines. That meant there was little opportunity to flush the boilers. Close to the front, the engines had no choice but to replenish their shallow water tanks from shell holes. Among other "noxious substances" in shell holes, there was the soap from doughboys who had done their wash there. The foaming water from these shell holes played havoc with locomotive boilers.[11] It was not a pretty picture, but the engineers persevered through all the problems and kept the supply chain moving.

It wasn't just the British, French and American armies that operated light railways, usually called "trench railways" by the British. The German army had them too. Indeed, one of the curious features of the technology is that both sides used the 60 centimeter gauge. One might think that a better defensive posture would have been to operate a light railway system on a different gauge than the enemy's. But apparently both sides thought that one day they would break through the opposing line, in which case it would be an advantage to be able to use their own equipment on the enemy's rails.

Indeed, when the St Mihiel offensive was about to start, two companies of the 21st Engineers were deployed just behind the combat troops, ready to move into the salient in order to take over the German light railways. The German trench railways were in terrible shape by then, but the engineers quickly worked them back into serviceable condition, adding 93 miles of supply lines that shortened connections for the approaching Meuse-Argonne offensive.

Preparations

The 21st Engineers participated in one of the most remarkable maneuvers of the Great War. From the day he had arrived in France, the A.E.F. commander, General John J. Pershing, had devoted much of his time and energy to the political goal of establishing an autonomous role for his American army. The supreme allied commander General Foch, and the British commander General Haig, were pushing instead for the American combat divisions to be dispersed as reinforcements for their French and British allies along the Western Front.

The dispute came to a head in early September 1918. General Foch finally relented, on condition that Pershing would commit to not one but two huge offensives, the first to eliminate the Germans' St. Mihiel salient northwest of Verdun, and the second to assault the Germans' defensive stronghold in the rugged region north and west of St. Mihiel between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest. The problem was that both

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[11] Dunn, page 97.

offensives were to start in September, and the take-off lines were about 60 miles apart. Pershing would have to move almost his entire army from one front to the other, with little time to spare.

The 21st Engineers built and operated the light railways in support of both offensives.[12] The St. Mihiel offensive was just about to start when Company N arrived in Lorraine.

General Pershing in his two-volume Great War memoir did not use many footnotes; most of them appear to be after-thoughts he considered important enough to add while he was re-reading the manuscript. One of the footnotes was devoted to the light railway system. Pershing had opposed a general supply system among the allies, just as he had opposed an inter-mingling of the troops. He pointed to the light railways as an indicator that the independent American supply system "was already giving excellent service" by September 1918. In the footnote he seemed to be pausing to explain—to a popular readership that otherwise probably would not have known—what the light railways did:

> "The 60-centimeter railway, about 20 inches between rails, was used immediately behind the lines to transport ammunition and other supplies and was often used to carry troops and remove the wounded. The track came in sections and was easily and quickly laid, though oftentimes on soft ground a foundation of stone or the use of wooden ties was necessary. The engines and cars were relatively small, but the cars were supposed to carry about ten tons and often carried more than that. The operation of these lines was conducted by the engineers under the organization known as the Light Railway Department."[13]

The Chief Engineer of the A.E.F. Dept. of Light Railways, Major Frank G. Jonah, considered the 21st Engineers' "A-S line" between Abainville and Sorcy, 18 miles to the north, to be the most important and best constructed of all the light railways the army engineers built in France. Completed in late August 1918, it was a key supply line for the American forces supporting the American First Army's St. Mihiel offensive which began on Sept. 12.[14]

Constraints on the A-S line's construction made it a significant engineering achievement. The A-S line roughly paralleled a French standard gauge line that had been heavily damaged. Even so, the light rail line was constrained to not crossing the standard gauge line at grade, and it was limited to following the natural contours of the land so as not to exceed a 3 percent grade. That meant more miles, more curves and more work for the engineers.

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[12] See Map 2-6, page 23, for a map of the 60 cm railways operated by the 21st Engineers in the St. Mihiel sector, and Map 2-7, page 26, for a map of the railways in the Meuse-Argonne sector. Source: Dunn, pages 20 and 21.

[13] Pershing, John J. *My Experiences in the World War*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931. Volume II, page 221.

[14] See Map 3-1, page 24. Source: Dunn, page 36.

The counterweighted lift bridge where the A-S Line crossed the Marne-Rhine Canal at Void, designed by Chief of Engineers Frank G. Jonah.[14]

The American Offensives

The St. Mihiel offensive was "the first important mission of the nearly united and nearly all-American army of 61,061 officers and 1,345,067 enlisted men."[15] Its objective was to eliminate a salient "pointed toward Paris" that the German army had occupied since 1914. The Americans were to attack the south and west flanks of the salient while the French attacked the nose.

General Pershing assigned the 10 A.E.F. infantry divisions with the most combat experience—only four of which had been in France as long as three months—to take on the task. They went over the top at 5:00 am on Sept. 12 and "attacking with élan, penetrated at the first shock of their Eastern attack nearly six miles upon a front of eleven miles."[16] The German army had suspected an attack was coming, but didn't know when, and they had already begun to withdraw from the salient. Even so, the American attack caught them off guard.[17] Within 48 hours the two American forces had converged and taken the 200 square-mile salient. They captured 13,250 prisoners, 442 guns and 752 machine guns. American losses in four days of fighting were about 7,000 killed and wounded, considered "moderate" by Great War standards.

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[14] Source: Dunn, page 35.
[15] Farwell, Byron. *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917-1918.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999. Page 206.
[16] Farwell, page 213.
[17] Lengel, Edward G. *To Conquer Hell: The Meuse-Argonne, 1918.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008. Page 52.

St. Mihiel was an allied victory, although not a huge victory from a military or strategic standpoint. Its value was in other factors. First, it gave valuable combat experience to American officers and soldiers who so far did not have much, giving them the opportunity to fight *smarter* in their next, much harder battle. Second, the logistical shortages and leadership mistakes encountered during the offensive showed where the American army's commanders needed to make corrections. Third, there was the crucial issue of morale, both among the combatants and at home. In General Pershing's words:

> "No form of propaganda could overcome the depressing effect on the enemy's morale of the fact that a new adversary had been able to put a formidable army in the field against him which, in its first offensive, could win such an important engagement. This result, after nearly a year and a half of working and waiting, must have tremendously heartened our people at home, as it gave them a tangible reason to believe that our contribution to the war would be the deciding factor. It inspired our troops with unlimited confidence which was to stand them in good stead against the weary days and nights of battle they were to experience later on. The St. Mihiel victory probably did more than any single operation of the war to encourage the tired Allies."[18]

The "weary days and nights" were about to start. What followed, the Meuse-Argonne offensive, was the largest battle in American military history. Some 1.2 million American soldiers in 22 infantry divisions assaulted one of the strongest defensive positions along the entire German line. The first divisions attacked on Sept. 26, and the battle did not end until the armistice on Nov. 11. The American army lost 26,000 men dead and 96,000 wounded in only seven weeks of fighting. About 2,400 artillery pieces fired more than four million shells.[19]

All of the men, ammunition, food and equipment for a battle of this scope and duration had to make it to the front. And before they could even start, the entire American army had to move the 60 miles west from the St. Mihiel front to new positions facing the Meuse-Argonne line. The Americans borrowed as many trucks from the French as they could, but the light railways were crucial in keeping things moving. There were equipment shortages, service glitches and political disputes along the way, but the A.E.F.'s Army Engineers managed to get the job done.

The 1918 Influenza

Private Roberts had not spoken of the scope of the influenza epidemic in his letters, although he was aware and concerned that his father back home had been stricken. He knew what topics in soldiers' letters were

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[18] Pershing, Volume II, page 273.
[19] Lengel, page 4.

subject to censorship, and the impact of the influenza epidemic on the A.E.F. was certainly one of them. His comment 50 years later—"Influenza killed more people than the war itself."—was no overstatement. The toll of the disease was more than 21 million world-wide, most in the course of only about 24 weeks.

General Pershing recalled that "[i]nfluenza in the Army had assumed very serious proportions" during the early weeks of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, with "over 16,000 cases additional having been reported [just] during the week ending October 5th." The A.E.F. eventually reported nearly 70,000 influenza cases treated in hospitals, with a death rate of 32 percent.[20]

Although the 1918 Influenza was widely called the "Spanish flu" at the time, due to some uncensored press reports of the early form of the disease in Spain in late spring, researchers now are convinced that the lethal mutated form of the influenza virus had originated in the United States (Haskell County, Kansas, to be precise) in February 1918.[21] Relatively mild at first, it developed into its lethal form later in the year and moved through military camps in the U.S. and then to Europe, infecting the civilian population along the way.

The 1918 influenza was not like other flu viruses before or since: "Normally influenza chiefly kills the elderly and infants, but in the 1918 pandemic roughly half of those who died were young men and women in the prime of their life, in their twenties and thirties."[22] Because the virus was so virulent, human immune systems attacked it with all they had, and those with the strongest immune systems—young people (including soldiers) in their teens, twenties and thirties—died when their immune reactions destroyed their own lungs in the attempt to combat the virus.

Private Roberts and his colleagues in Company N were fortunate that the *Great Northern* did not embark from Hoboken with the influenza already on board. They were fortunate again that they were not widely infected in early September when they disembarked at Brest, where most Americans arrived in France. The *Leviathan*, one of the other ships in Private Roberts's convoy, was an infected ship on its return trip to New York in September, and its next trip to France with another load of troops was described as a "floating casket."[23]

Company N's relative isolation in the support lines behind the A.E.F. in Lorraine in October and November helped protect them from the ongoing infection. Gilbert Roberts's later observation that "strict discipline kept the epidemic under control in the army" was accurate, but the controls were more due to unit-level precautions than to army-wide policies. Back home, Camp A. A. Humphreys, Company N's home until late August, was

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[20] Pershing, Volume II, page 327.
[21] Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History.* New York: Viking, Penguin Group, 2004. Page 455.
[22] Barry, page 4.
[23] Barry, pages 304-306.

badly infected by mid-September. The Army's top priority in the fall of 1918 was to get more troops to the front, not to control the spread of the disease. All in all, more American military personnel were killed by the 1918 influenza than were killed in combat in the entire war in Vietnam.

What's Next?

The armistice did not mean the work of the 21st Engineers was done. They continued to operate the Abainville Shops and the A-S light rail line between Abainville and Sorcy. For the next three months they used this and the other light railway lines "to help maintain and reconstruct the French railways, and haul rations, personnel, salvage, German ammunition for demolition, etc."[24] When they turned over the A-S line to the French on Feb. 15, 1919, the materials, supplies and equipment the French inherited at the Abainville Shops alone were valued at about $107 million.

In the weeks between the armistice and Thanksgiving, the men (and the few women) of the A.E.F. concentrated on the issue that was most important to them: going home. Private Roberts's opinion that "the boys who came over first should go home first" was, generally speaking, the way it worked out. In his case that meant later rather than sooner, specifically the following July, but his place at the back of the line made possible one of the great opportunities of his life. Stay tuned for that.

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Introduction and Afterword by Bruce R. DeBolt
(A great-nephew of Gilbert Roberts)
Portland, Oregon, November 2011.

A Note on Sources:

The sources cited in the Afterword (identified in detail in the footnotes) all would be good stops for additional reading to expand on the context of Private Roberts's experiences.

Richard Dunn's *Narrow Gauge to No Man's Land* is the definitive work on the Army Engineers' Light Railway regiments: full of facts, narrative, photographs and maps[25].

Byron Farwell's *Over There* is a comprehensive, high-level but readable history of the U.S. role in the Great War.

Edward Lengel's *To Conquer Hell* is a more focused military history of the American First Army's Meuse-Argonne offensive and its predecessor, the St. Mihiel offensive.

General Pershing's *My Experiences in the World War* is a surprisingly readable account from the A.E.F. commander's viewpoint, showing that Pershing was considerably more occupied by issues of logistics and international politics than he was by military strategy or tactics.

John Barry's *The Great Influenza* is a captivating account of the 1918 influenza epidemic and of the doctors and scientists who tried to understand and combat it.

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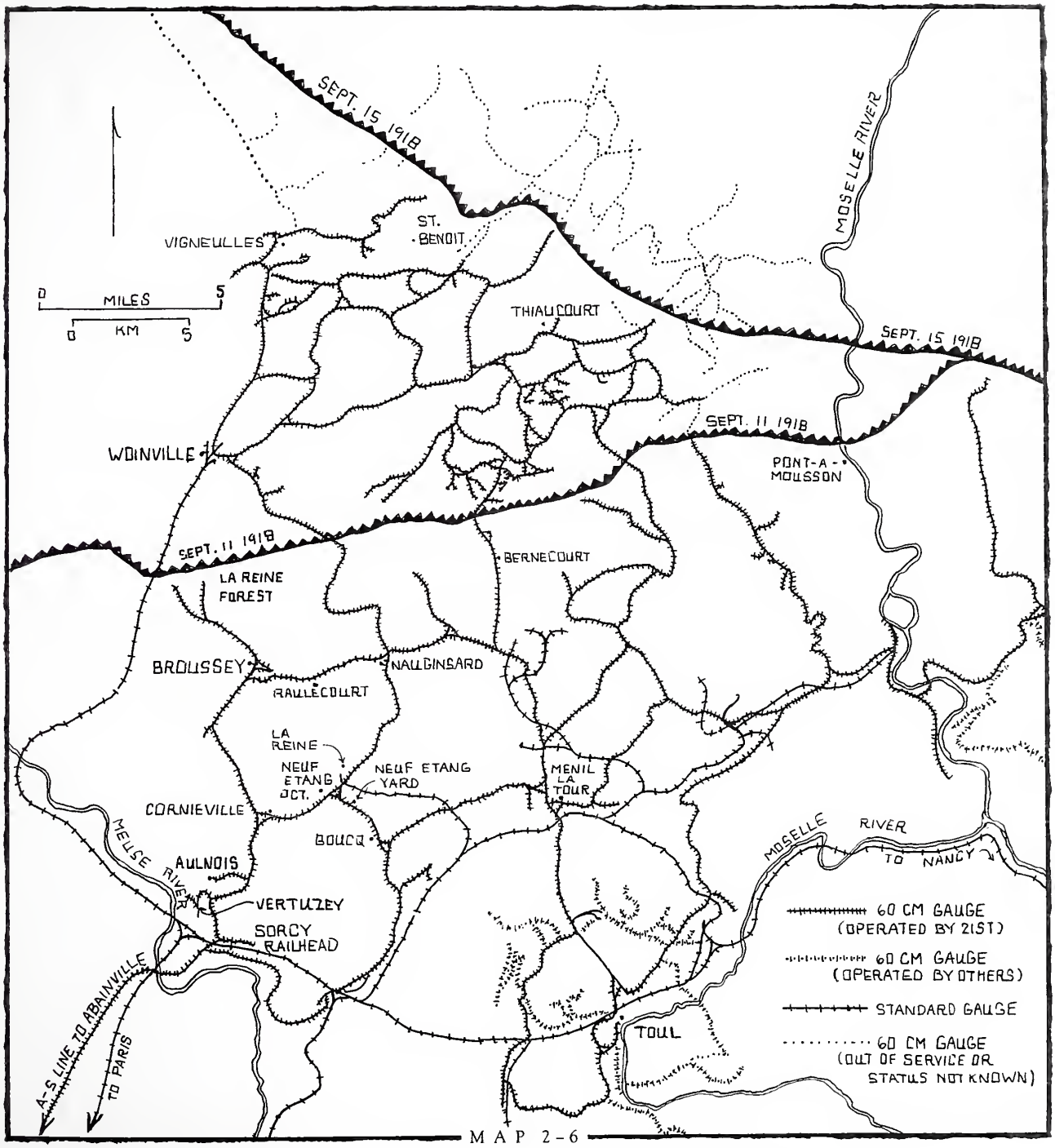
[24] Dunn, page 135.

[25] Sources of maps: Map 2-6 on page 23, Dunn page 20; Map 3-1 on page 24, Dunn page 36; Map 3-5 on page 25, Dunn page 36; Map 2-7 on page 26, Dunn page 21

copy in the archive of the Army Engineers at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The regimental history was dedicated "as a tribute to [Lieutenant Colonel Hiram J. Slifer] and those of his boys who will not return." Colonel Slifer, the chief engineer of the regiment, had had a long career with railroads in the U.S. and was considered "father of the 21st Regiment of Engineers." He was injured in a train accident two days after the armistice and died of complications in February 1919. The tribute listed 35 deaths from among the regiment's 3,800 personnel, only two (Lt. McClure and Private Chellemi) from Company N. A few of the deaths were from hostile action or train accidents, but most were from pneumonia that may have been related to the influenza epidemic.

B.R.D.

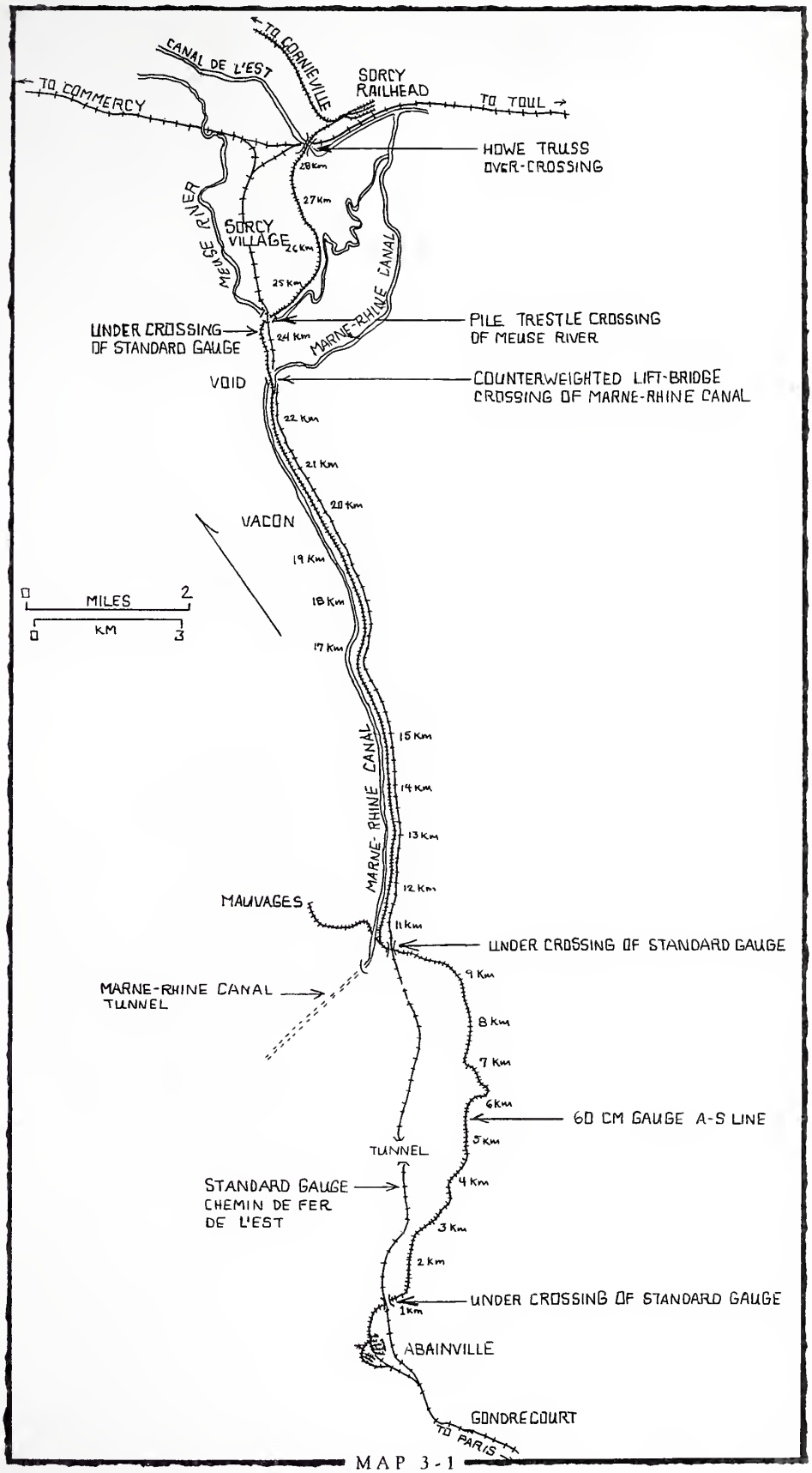


MAP 2-6

60 CM RAILWAYS OPERATED BY THE 21ST ENGINEERS
IN THE ST. MIHIEL-PONT-A-MOUSSON SECTOR

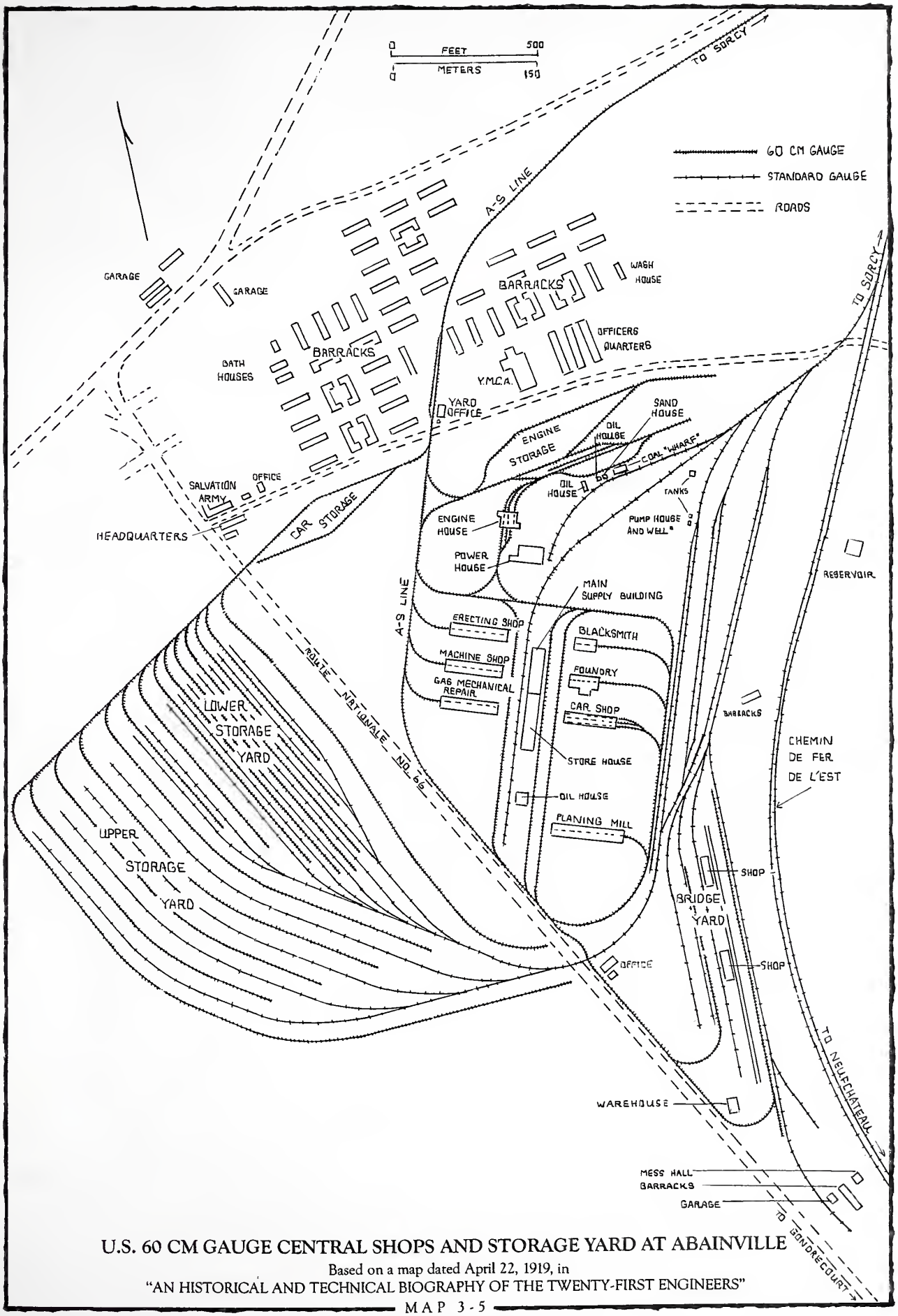
(St. Mihiel is off the map to the west of Woinville)

Based on data from latest revision on Oct. 7, 1918 from
"An Historical and Technical Biography of the Twenty-first Engineers"



MAP 3-1

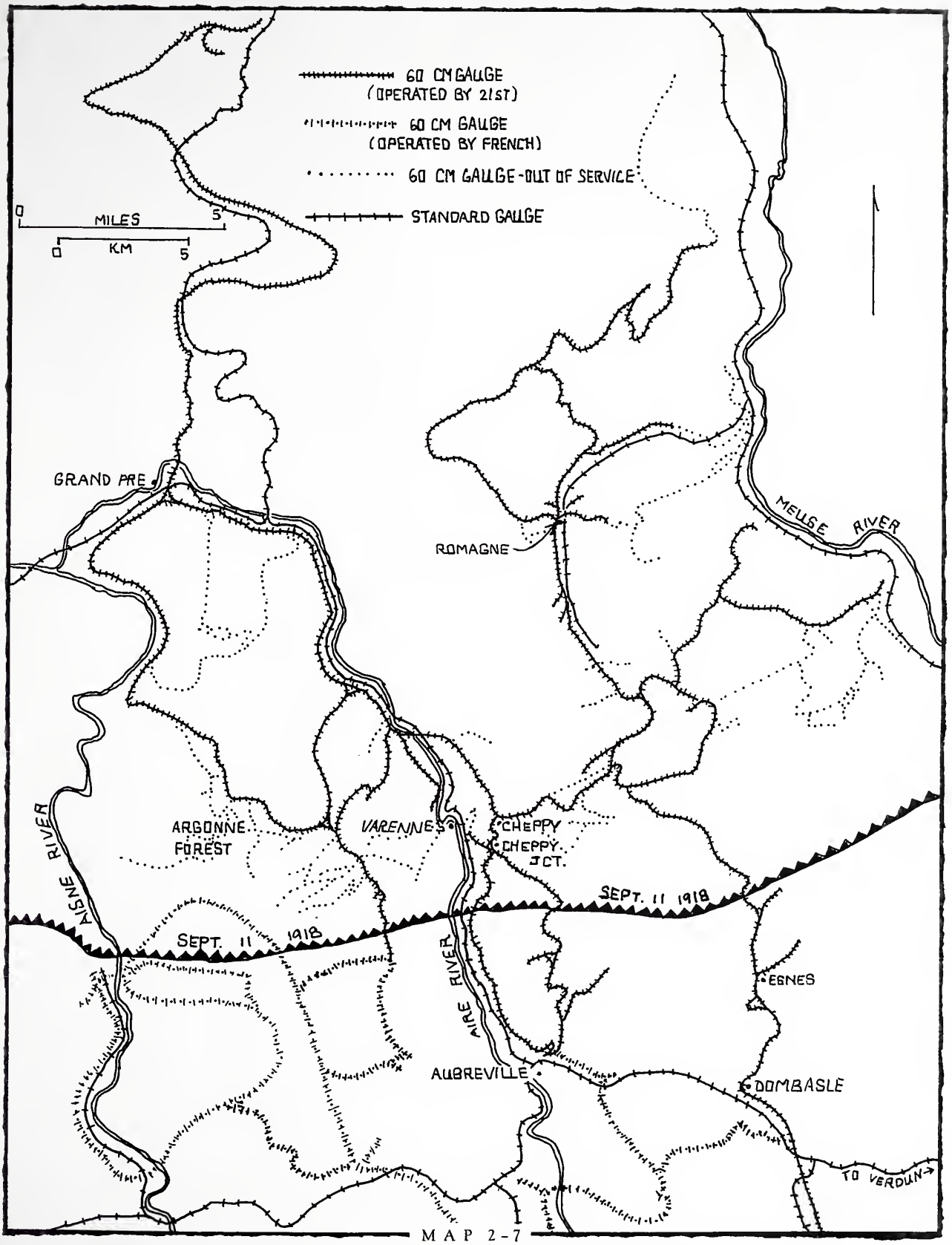
THE A-S LINE



U.S. 60 CM GAUGE CENTRAL SHOPS AND STORAGE YARD AT ABAINVILLE

Based on a map dated April 22, 1919, in
"AN HISTORICAL AND TECHNICAL BIOGRAPHY OF THE TWENTY-FIRST ENGINEERS"

MAP 3-5



MAP 2-7

60 CM RAILWAYS OPERATED BY THE 21ST ENGINEERS IN THE ARGONNE SECTOR

Based on data from "An Historical and Technical Biography of the Twenty-First Engineers"
(Latest Revision on November 13, 1918)